



THE KEYS OF THE CITY

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BY
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THE KEYS OF THE CITY
PART I

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CHAPTER I

UNTIL David Wells was twelve years he had scarcely a playfellow. A gentle and imaginative boy, he did not possess those qualities which command the friendship of the youth of his own generation, no matter how keenly he longed for it. But aside from this his isolation was no phenomenon. It is easily explained.

Along the Shore Road of that suburb of Brooklyn, well named Bay Ridge, perched high on the cliff overlooking New York harbor, were many large and beautiful homes, old houses for the greater part, with wide lawns and verandas with fine Colonial pillars but, beneath the cliff, for many a mile, there was only the little red house where David lived with his father and mother. And his father made his living by fishing and renting out boats, which was more than ample reason why the mothers of the Shore Road residences should forbid their offspring to play with the fisherman's boy. Occasionally the lure of the rowboats and the gray old wharf drew these children down de-

spite their parents' commands, but with the cruel and unvarnished snobbery of childhood they let David see plainly enough that they were condescending, and unless he was hard pressed by loneliness he would have none of them. He had his pride as well as they.

Then Nora Davenport came down to the Bay Ridge shore for the summer with her father and mother and a certain Colonel Craig, and at this household, especially at a peculiar air of bravado which Mrs. Davenport flaunted before them, the neighboring ladies suspected the worst, withdrew their skirts, and walked by the house, which the Davenports rented, with averted glances. Accordingly little Nora Davenport was as severely shunned as David; in the most natural way in the world the two detached little bodies drifted together and became dear friends.

It was one afternoon in June that they first fell into companionship.

David had not yet emerged from that period in which digging in the sand and erecting all sorts of forts and battlements and castles was an engrossing pastime. He was delving deep into a pool when Nora, sauntering aimlessly along the beach, encountered him—and halted.

“What is it—a tunnel?” she asked after three minutes of silent inspection.

The boy had been acutely aware of her presence, even of her approach, but he said nothing, only dug the more furiously until she made the advance. Then he looked up eagerly enough. "No, it 's not a tunnel."

"Is it just a plain pool?"

"No, it 's an aquarium. When the tide comes in and goes out again I expect there 'll be a lot of killies in it and maybe a crab."

"What are killies?"

"You know—little fish."

"Minnows?"

"Some people call 'em that."

She waited a minute. "You can find them in all the old pools around here without digging new ones."

"Yes, but it 's more fun to dig your own pool. Then you feel as if you owned it."

She took a step forward, and David was able to see her perfectly without betraying his interest too obviously. He saw at once, of course, that she was a stranger, and he appreciated in a vague way that she was expensively dressed. Her short, white skirt stuck out primly starched and her thin, straight, black legs were sheathed in stockings free from the darned patches which invariably disfigured his, while on her small feet were low, black shiny shoes with silver buckles.

Suddenly in the midst of his inspection she flopped down beside him and sat with her legs crossed. It was done with so enchanting a disregard of the effect of wet stones and sand upon white linen that it quite won David's heart.

"What do you do with the minnows and crabs when you catch them?" she asked, bending over to peer into the pool, her straight little nose wrinkled with the intensity of her inspection, her wide black sailor hat pushed so far back upon her dark brown hair that it resembled a somber halo.

He gave her a quick glance, wondering if she were worthy of his confidence, and finally trusted her with a stammering and red-faced, "Oh, I—I make believe."

"Fairy stories and all that?"

"No, not fairy stories. I've outgrown them, but stories about heroes and princesses and kings."

"Those are fairy stories."

"No, they're not," he exclaimed, anxiously trying to make the subtle difference clear; "there's no witches or fairies in 'em; just people like you and me, people that could be real, only they're of noble blood and do wonderful things."

"I believe in fairy stories," she said; but not to be outdone by him in knowledge, added quickly:

"Of course, I don't really, truly believe in them. I just make believe I believe in them. It's much nicer."

There fell a little silence upon them, and the girl picked up a round white stone and threw it far so that it fell into the open water beyond the pools and the rocks. The way she did it called forth David's admiration and he felt an overwhelming desire to know more about her. "What's your name?" he asked.

"Nora Davenport. I've only come down to Bay Ridge for the summer. We live in New York in the winter, but every summer we go away somewhere near enough to the city for my father and Colonel Craig to go there every day."

"Who's Colonel Craig?"

"Oh, he's a sort of uncle, I guess. He always lives with us."

Then David told her his name and who he was, fearful that when she heard she would declare, as so many others had done, that she would not be allowed to play with him. She did nothing of the kind, however, but merely sat and looked at him with her wide, gray eyes. So the two children studied each other, half-hesitant, half-bold, with beating hearts, wondering, as all of us do at times, whether here at last was the true comrade to whom we can tell everything, before whom we

can pour out our innermost thoughts and feelings, knowing that they shall receive not ridicule but sympathy, not criticism but understanding. They were very much interested in each other, but they took the most elaborate precautions to hide their interest. When for the second or third time their eyes met questioningly, they were overcome with confusion, and they turned their gaze to the bay and the little waves which spread their fringed and rounded edges like soft filmy lace upon the sand.

The June afternoon hung between five and six. It was a very golden afternoon. A fine and wonderfully transparent golden curtain had descended from heaven, or rather it was as if some one had scattered tiny golden flakes like a light snowstorm turned golden, over the trees and the grass and the water. Even the blue sky looked golden, a black bird hung aloft in its golden bowl, and there was a golden haze in the air. The green and brown shores of Staten Island, a full mile across the bay, appeared startlingly near; a white spire rising from among pale green trees shone against the blue sky. And ships with sails vividly white crept over the water without creating a ripple, as if drawn by invisible wires. It was all very still, just the little waves met and frothed, whispered and parted.

At last David jumped to his feet with: "Have you seen the City from here?"

"The City?"

"Yes. If you climb out on those rocks, from the farthest one, that great big black one, you can see New York. I often climb out there to see it. But you 'll have to be careful because the rocks are wet and covered with seaweed—the water 's deep all around there. But I 'll help you."

She threw back the heavy strands of her hair with an impatient hand, "Let 's race down," she suggested, flashing him a challenging glance, which he was to come to recognize as characteristic of her.

She saw that he was ready and her slender body straightened and was off with the gliding smoothness of a bird's flight. It was all David could do to keep up with her and it was she who actually reached the rocks first. She knew by his expression that he was piqued, so she put her hand on his shoulder and said, breathless and laughing, "Don't be angry because I won. I know it 's made you mad just because I 'm a girl. Think of me as a boy, I don't want any odds. If you do that we 'll get along lots better."

"I 'll help you over the rocks." He extended his hand, his touch of vexation vanished.

"No, I don't want your help." Nora was already on the third rock, balancing for the fourth.

"The water 's deep."

"I can swim," she threw back over her shoulder.

"Bet I can beat you swimming."

"Bet you can't!"

"We 'll see some day."

They reached the last rock and gave their attention to the City. From the beach it could not be seen as the curving shore hid it from view, but from here it loomed large in the distance, stately and impressive, yet shadowy and mysterious, like the Phantom City of a dream. Although many of the highest buildings were not yet erected and the kings of them all were not to rise for many a year, the pinnacles of the City already leapt to meet the low evening sky which hung around them like violet and pink veils.

David sat down on the rock and rested his chin on his hand, gazing at the City, silent so long that Nora asked impatiently, "What are you thinking about?"

"I'm thinking it 's like Far Cathay."

"What 's Far Cathay?"

"I don't know. I read it somewhere."

"Have you ever been to the City?"

He shook his head. "Not to New York. I've

been to Brooklyn quite often. Mother takes me about twice a month when she goes to see her lawyer. But never to the City we see from here."

"You 'll go some day?"

He did not reply immediately, but arose and stood facing the City, gazing at it eagerly, intently, with longing and yet with a little defiance. "Yes, I 'll go. I often dream of going. Oh, I want to go. . . . I want to be a man, there in the City, working away for something. And yet it 's so big, so looking as if it did n't care! But I want to go; I 'm not afraid of it."

Nora considered his words, a crease between her frowning little eyebrows. She was sitting with one leg drawn up and her hands slightly grimy from seaweed and sand, clasping her knee. Something in what David had said carried its thrill to her. "Oh, I *wish* I were a man!" she exclaimed savagely.

David dropped beside her; he had appeared older standing, facing the City, but he was quite boyish and commonplace again. "Why?" he asked absently, seeing how near he could get his foot to the water without actually wetting it.

"Well, it seems to me all that a girl can make believe is she 's going to be married some day and have a lot of children. I don't like to make believe that."

"What do you make believe then?"

"Oh, I pretend that I'm sailing somewhere with a pirate crew, and sometimes I'm the captain and, of course, I'm a man then, and sometimes I pretend I'm a beautiful white captive stolen from the Morocco coast and, of course, then I'm a woman."

David was deeply interested; here was a girl with an imagination he immediately acknowledged the peer of his own. "What do the pirates do to the beautiful white captive?"

"They all fall in love with me and then they let me go free."

"Oh, go on, I bet they would n't. The captain would take you to his hut on a desert isle and from there you'd be rescued after many years by an English nobleman and—"

"No, I would n't at all," interrupted Nora, surprised and displeased at his temerity in tampering with her story; "I would n't do that at all."

"What would you do?"

"I don't know. I know when I'm really pretending, but I can't pretend when you keep on spoiling things."

The afternoon was fading; gray and somber violet were taking the place of gold. Nora scrambled to her feet and cried, "Lord, I bet it's late. I have to go home to dinner. If I'm late I

have to eat in the kitchen; although I 'd just as lief only they leave out the peppermints at the end of the dinner in the kitchen."

"I have to go home, too," said David. "There 's mother now. See her out on the boat landing? She 's looking around. She don't see me." He called and waved his hand and the woman, when she saw he was coming, waved in reply and, turning, disappeared into the little red house.

The children clambered back over the rocks. David offered his hand, but Nora firmly refused it and as a consequence, slipped and almost fell.

"I told you you 'd better let me help you," cried David exultantly.

"I did n't fall, did I?" retorted Nora tartly.

"You almost did."

"Well, what you almost do does n't count."

When, at last, they stood firmly on the sandy beach, there was an awkward pause.

"I 'll see you to-morrow," Nora said presently, kicking at a smooth white log drifted in from the sea.

David's hands were buried in his pockets and his feet were firmly planted far apart as he gazed at her and said: "Perhaps you 'd rather play with some of the others. If you would you 're welcome to, but I 'd rather know now." He said it defi-

antly, but he was glad she could not see the anxiety with which he awaited her answer.

“Oh, they won’t play with me. I don’t know why,” she said, in a matter-of-fact tone as if long since she had given up the problem as insolvable, “so let’s just us two be friends. I’d rather have a boy for a friend. Girls are so silly.”

“All right,” he replied seriously; but his heart sang joyously. And he would have liked to have said more, to assure her of his devotion and humility, but he could find no words to express them.

He watched her as she ran down the beach and up the cliff, swinging her large sailor hat as she ran. At the top of the cliff she turned and called, but he could not understand what she said. So he simply waved. Then he went home to his supper, aglow with happiness and a vibrant excitement.

CHAPTER II

THROUGH David's earliest memories ran the murmur of waters. It was like the accompaniment of an old and plaintive song. Years afterward, when life had buffeted and bruised and taken its toll of him, by merely closing his eyes he could hear the murmur of waters outside the window of the little white room in which he was born. And the room itself he could see distinctly in its every detail. His earliest remembrance was of a morning when he had lifted himself on an elbow and gazed out the small dormer window from whose sill Virginia creeper and honeysuckle waved their leaves in the soft wind. For on that morning, for the first time, he realized what Beauty is.

His white cot had a patchwork quilt; bright green and red were its predominating colors, although a salmon patch with a pale blue flower in its center was prominent. His mother had made the quilt before he was born, here in the quiet house, awaiting his coming. . . . Then there was a white washstand with red banded towels hanging on a rack beside it; an old humpbacked bureau with a round mirror which caught and threw back the

morning sunlight; one or two low chairs with thatched seats, and a rag carpet on the floor.

But better than the room he remembered the view from the window. Out there the waters continuously whispered so that he was conscious of their voices even in his sleep. A short, square-nosed dock pushed its way into the protesting ripples, and moored to it the flotilla of rowboats ceaselessly rocked. And whenever David in later years thought of the view from his window spring was upon it, glorifying it; the syringa bushes and strawberry shrubs were always in bloom, sending up their heavy scent; the slopes of the cliff shone in the sun and were pied with yellow and white flowers; the beach was silver and on the beach the blue water, the wonderful blue water, tossed its foam.

David's was the only room upstairs in that little red house so closely tucked beneath the cliff that it seemed to carry half its weight on its sturdy roof. Downstairs it spread itself out as a man with a pack on his back spreads his feet to get a firm foundation. There was the kitchen where the meals were eaten as well as cooked, the big square room in which his mother and father slept, and the parlor which was held sacred to Sunday and at best only used in winter when David's mother sat there in the late afternoon in a rocker by the win-

dow reading the Bible or the Pilgrim's Progress. In summer she sat outside on the veranda with the book lying open on her lap and her eyes turned toward the sea, as if she expected some one who never came.

David never understood his mother; he stood very much in awe of her even when he was the smallest of toddlers; she was so silent, so inflexible, and she went about her household duties with lips so tightly pressed together, with such a rigid and bitterly uncomplaining air.

But towards his father his feelings were quite different. He understood him perfectly and he loved him very much. He was ridiculously proud of his father's strength. Often he had watched admiringly while his father lifted one of the heavy rowboats over his head and carried it, with steady, unwavering steps up above high-water mark to be painted or overhauled.

Mr. Wells often took David with him on his fishing trips. Occasionally they went as far as the ocean side of Staten Island in quest of bluefish or weak fish. Once or twice, to David's delight, they spent the night at an old weather-beaten inn on the south shore of the island, built before the Revolution, full of the most mysterious passages and corners. Here with David safely tucked in bed John Wells descended to the bar. But long before

David fell asleep, he would hear his father's deep voice roaring out wild songs of the sea with a chorus of his cronies taking up the refrain at the end of each verse. Thrilling stuff for the small boy upstairs, hugging the musty-smelling bed covers to his chin, with mad fancies of pirates and sea robbers careening through his mind. . . .

One thing which David noticed and which his parents never imagined he noticed, was the way in which his father attempted to be affectionate with his mother, to secure her hand, to put his arm around her waist, to touch the back of her neck with his lips as she stood gazing out the window with that expectant look in her eyes. And David noticed his mother always discouraged these attempts, and he grew very sorry for the big man who was his father. But he knew quite well that he must never show his sympathy nor must he even betray his intense interest in these things.

No friends ever came to the little red house. The only visitors were people to inquire whether Mr. Wells could supply them with some extra nice porgies on Friday or a fine mess of eels on Monday. Then, of course, on Saturday afternoons and all day Sunday in bright mild weather there was an endless stream of men, women, and children who came to hire boats: young men with their chattering, beribboned sweethearts; family parties of

Germans; men in groups of two or three equipped with fishing tackle and smelling most unpleasantly of whisky.

For many years David's only playmate was the beach and its myriad treasures—shells and the driftwood, pools and their inhabitants, which so conveniently lent themselves to fable and story, and the hundreds of strange things which the sea threw up. Later there were Books! They opened a world of romance. There was a public library in Bay Ridge—not then the red and white brick Carnegie Library which was to supplant it, but an humble library which found shelter in a corner of the huge wooden building called the Atheneum where church concerts and entertainments were given. To this library David made pilgrimage at least thrice a week. At first fairy stories and then, as soon as the librarian permitted, books of the sea and adventure by Captain Marryatt, Mr. Henty, and their fellows. A year or two after he discovered Dickens and Scott and, of course, Jules Verne.

So his life was lived mostly alone until into it swept Nora Davenport, very real, very tangible, and inexpressibly adorable.

CHAPTER III

HOW that summer sped! It was a summer of perpetual silver mornings and golden afternoons that, as if, under the wand of an enchanter, melted one into another and swept on like a stream.

Nora and David were always together, swimming together, running down the beach together, evolving innumerable stories together—and generally disputing their ending. Nora always insisted upon an unhappy ending— “Because things always end unhappily really,” she said, her dark eyes glowing with intensity; while David held out for the more conventional happy-ever-afterward ending. “Because,” he said, with a solemn shake of his head, “that ’s as it ought to be.”

Quite early in the summer Pip appeared on the scene. Pip was a small black and brown dog with tremendously bowed front legs and an amiable and cock-sure-of-his-welcome expression, despite two protuberant and particularly fierce looking front teeth. He also boasted an abbreviated tail that did a terrific amount of wagging. He was probably some breed of bulldog and when Colonel Craig

presented him to Mrs. Davenport who in turn passed him on to her small daughter, it was claimed that he had a most remarkable pedigree. But although Pip looked like a bloated prize-fighter who had won every contest in which he had figured, he was extremely genial and friendly. He was not proud. He soon became passionately devoted to Nora who really very much spoiled him, picking him up in her arms and fondling him the while he gazed up into her face and panted, with his red curling tongue hanging out of his mouth and his ridiculous tail doing its best to beat a brisk tattoo against her blue serge skirt.

Nora lavished on him all the endearing names she could invent, and with Nora that was a very great number. David pretended to be disgusted at this until Nora was out of sight and Pip left in his charge when he was hardly better than she.

Pip followed them everywhere. He was even with them on the raft. They built it behind a weather-blackened shed that had begun its career as a boathouse, but was now used as a bathhouse by the Dodges who owned it. The children took extraordinary precautions to prevent discovery, for they did not want to be interfered with nor their purpose divined. Secrecy increased the interest of their labors a hundredfold. It eventually

turned out to be a staunch and seaworthy craft. Which was fortunate.

David's part was to haul the logs up the beach and behind the shed. (Nora lent a hand with the larger ones.) And then Nora and he took turns in sawing and hammering, while Pip lay out in the sun, blinking and ready to sound the alarm if any passers-by appeared.

Nora discovered a length of wire rope in the tool house of her garden and that virtually solved the problem of holding the raft together. But when, after six days' constant labor, it was finished, they found it so heavy they could not move it. It could not be budged an inch.

"We should have built it down by the water!" exclaimed Nora, giving the mass of logs a last ineffectual tug, concluding with an exasperated kick, and then sitting down on it disgustedly close to tears.

"But everybody would have known," said David.

"It just comes of your wanting to pretend it was a secret warship."

David gazed at her sorrowfully; prior to this she had entered into the idea of secrecy with enthusiasm, and besides, he now remembered, it was she who originally suggested building the raft in back of the boathouse.

But he said nothing and merely stood dejectedly, his hands in his pockets, regarding Nora with reproach and the raft with hatred.

At last, as the afternoon was getting short, they were obliged to call upon David's father to help them. Nora was the spokesman. Mr. Wells agreed to launch the raft if they promised not to sail out of the little cove. They immediately and cheerfully promised.

He left them standing on the strand, hanging to the rope attached to the raft, which was serenely bobbing up and down on the broken waves of the little bay. But as soon as the big man passed from their sight David and Nora simultaneously leaped aboard and pushed out. They had oars and a long pole for punting, and they had prepared, days ago, the story to accompany the important ceremony of launching.

They were Nihilists escaping from Siberia and more immediately from a pack of bloodthirsty wolves by way of the raft. They just reached it in time, as the bloody fangs of the foremost wolf snapped at their heels. Pip, standing on the shore gazing after them reproachfully, was the pack of wolves. But—alas for the illusion of the plot! He plunged into the water and swam after them, which was exciting as far as it went but, eventually, they had to lift him out of the water and up

on the raft instead of beating him off with oars and discharging their last shot at him—which the truth of the story demanded.

“Pippins!” exclaimed Nora, “why could n’t you stay on shore? Now we can’t play we ’re Nihilists because there ’s no use escaping if you ’re not escaping from anything.”

For a time they merely drifted around the little bay, with the erstwhile bloodthirsty wolf sleeping contentedly in the sun. Presently David, who had been musing, brightened with: “We can make believe we ’re De Soto going down the Mississippi and the shores are lined with savages.”

“Was n’t he buried in the river at midnight?”

“Yes; we can bury Pip.”

“No; he ’s wet enough already; besides he would n’t make a very good De Soto except when he ’s being buried.”

“Well, let ’s play the first part anyway.”

In their zeal at getting away from the savages they did not notice they were drifting rapidly out of the inner bay and past the line of rocks whose arm was its chief shelter. They did not realize it until a current took hold of the raft and carried it with swift hands out toward the open bay. David plied the oars frantically and Nora found the pole useless for the bottom was yards beyond its reach.

Finally they gave it up and looked at each other

with white faces. Only Pip was undisturbed.

"We 'll surely be seen and picked up," said David, as if Nora had asked him a question.

But the worst of it was that night was coming on. Both the shore and the bay were deserted except that at a distance, close to Staten Island, a few large boats and barges lay at anchor.

"Let 's yell!" suggested Nora, lifting up her clear young voice with: "Help! We 're drifting out!"

The raft was now seesawing dizzily with the motion of the large waves and the water curved and broke over the raft so that they were wet up to their waists. Nora had to pick Pip up and hold him in her arms to prevent him from being swept overboard.

"I wonder—if we 're going to be drowned," said Nora in a small voice.

"Don't be silly!" said David bravely, and added less confidently: "Do you think we ought to pray?"

"I think it will be better to keep on yelling!" said Nora, and tucking Pip beneath her arm she made a trumpet of her hands and called lustily.

"We ought to hang up a flag of distress," suggested David, after a few moments of vain shouting.

"It 's almost too dark to see it," answered Nora,

but she stripped off her white petticoat and David tied it to the punting pole and held it aloft while their eyes searched the shore.

"I think somebody 's coming!" cried Nora exultantly.

David stopped waving to gaze with her towards the shore where smaller objects were no longer distinct. "It 's a man in a rowboat," said Nora. "I 'm sure he sees us."

Presently the boat rounded the point of rocks. "It 's my father," said David.

It was he and before very long he had caught up with them. The afternoon had blended into twilight; in half an hour it would be dark. But in the dim light they were able to see that John Wells' face, usually so red and jovial, was now quite white. He reached out and grasped the side of the raft. "Jump in!" he ordered brusksly. "Quick!"

Nora with Pip, then David, clambered in, and John Wells rowed them home.

When they were on the shore Nora stood defiantly in front of the big man. "You 're not going to whip David, are you?" Her lips were blue with cold and her wet clothes clung to her. "We didn't mean to break our promise. We just drifted out. It was just as much my fault as his, so if you 're going to whip him, whip me, too."

To her intense surprise, and somewhat to her in-

dignation, John Wells merely picked her up and, kissing her, told her there were to be no whippings at all.

Nora ran home where a cold dinner awaited her in the kitchen, but no questions were asked as her parents had gone to the city.

But David's mother, as part punishment, part preventive of colds and other ills, made him go to bed immediately and gave him a liberal dose of physic. "I 'd much rather had the whipping," muttered David disgustedly.

They never saw the raft again; it probably drifted far out to sea or was thrown up on some lonely beach. But neither David nor Nora ever forgot it.

It was during the raft-building period that David saw Nora's mother for the first time. He thought she was the most beautiful woman in the world but he did not like her.

It came about in this way: David had hammered his finger instead of the nail and Nora, in far greater alarm than he at its bruised appearance, insisted that he run up to the house with her and there she would put liniment on it and bandage it. This was done upstairs. Coming down they passed the door of the sitting-room, the room with the high windows overlooking the bay. Mrs.

Davenport was in there with Colonel Craig to whom Nora owed Pip. Mrs. Davenport called to Nora while David hung awkwardly in the background.

"Who 's the boy?" Nora's mother asked.

And Nora answered: "That 's David—my chum."

At which Mrs. Davenport and Colonel Craig smiled at each other and David hated both of them for the manner of their smiling.

Finally David was dragged into the room and introduced. Mrs. Davenport, a large blonde woman in a shimmering, lacy gown, was lying on a divan; Colonel Craig was standing beside the mantel, tapping the end of a cigarette on his silver cigarette case. The woman put her hand on the boy's head. "You 're going to be a good-looking man," she said, prodding his cheeks with her long, white fingers. "I trust you look after Nora. She 's such a tomboy—I 'm always worried about her."

"Yes, ma'am," stammered David; while Nora murmured, "I can look out for myself, I guess."

Then Mrs. Davenport with a pretty little gesture dismissed them, and they ran out of the room and down to the beach, vaguely conscious of an immense sense of relief at getting out of the perfumed atmosphere of the room.

Several times Nora accompanied David and his father on their shorter fishing trips. She threw over her line with theirs.

"I hate the feel of the worms!" she exclaimed, wrinkling her nose in disgust as she fastened the wriggling worm on her hook.

"I'll bait it for you," offered David, reaching out to take the hook from her.

But she would have none of his assistance. "No, I'll do it myself. Anything you do, I can do, too."

But the summer, the long, long summer, could not last forever. July blazed; August bloomed and withered. In September when everything was at its goldenest, when along the cliff the poison ivy burned scarlet and yellow and the sea wore a soft misty mantle of purple, when the golden-rod bloomed and white and purple wild asters lined the water side of the Shore Road, the Davenports decided to go back to New York.

David himself had to return to school the following Monday.

Nora came down to the little red house to say good-by. The van with a wonderful picture of Washington Crossing the Delaware on one side and the Storming of Quebec on the other, was already before the Davenports' door.

"Let's walk along the beach," proposed David.

He knew of course why Nora had come, but he had not previously known this was the day of departure; Mrs. Davenport was a woman of sudden impulses.

They strolled along the beach and Pip followed. Pip could not understand why neither Nora nor David would throw sticks in the water for him to-day, although he stopped in front of every piece of driftwood and gave short, imperative barks to attract their attention.

"I've decided to give you Pip," Nora said at last, breaking the long silence.

"I'll be awful glad to have him," answered David. "He'll miss you terribly."

"Yes, but it's better for him to be down here with you than in a New York apartment. He's very fond of you—almost as much as he is of me."

"He likes me—but you lots, oh, *lots*, better," said David generously.

"Besides I wanted to give you something to remember me by—and Pip's the thing that's dearest to me."

"I'd remember you—anyway," mumbled David fiercely.

They turned back and neared the rocks from which you could see the City.

"Shall we climb out and have a last look at the City?" suggested David rather forlornly.

“No, we ’ll see it soon enough.”

Again a silence—an engulfing silence!

The day was inexpressibly sad; a mist was gathering over land and water and the damp air clung chillingly. Even the golden-rod looked dimmed.

“We—we ’ve had a fine old summer,” said Nora.

David nodded.

“I don’t think we missed—the children—who would n’t play with us!”

“We have n’t missed them a bit.”

“Are you—ever coming back?” he asked.

“I heard mother say she liked it down here—we ’d come back again next summer.”

David brightened. “That ’s fine—the winter is n’t so long with school and everything.”

But he looked at her sadly and she stirred uncomfortably under the open misery of his gaze. He looked like Pip when one scolded him. Pip himself was busily engaged in chasing down the beach. Nora whistled to him and he came bounding back to them, holding a broom handle triumphantly between his jaws. He thought at last Nora would throw it into the water for him. But she paid no attention. “I think I ’ll have to go,” she said to David. “The carriage leaves at five.”

David fished in his pocket and produced a small white box tied with a pink string which he awk-

wardly handed to Nora. "I bought this. I had some money in a bank. I wanted to give you something—to remember me by, too."

Nora carefully brought it forth from its wrappings. It was a gold heart-shaped locket on a fine gold chain. "Oh, David!" she exclaimed. "You should n't—"

Then she handed it to him saying: "I 'd like you to put it around my neck."

He did it with trembling fingers. He had no idea of what ailed him to-day. But he felt as if the whole world were coming to an end with Nora's departure.

They reached the path which led to Nora's house, a path which had been worn almost entirely by their own feet. Here Nora held out her hand. "Good-by. Hold Pip tight else he 'll follow me."

David held the dog in his arms, his fingers through the collar. "Good-by," he answered.

"Good-by, Pippins dear." Nora stooped and kissed him on the brown spot on one side of his black head.

Pip stretched out his tongue and panted. He did not understand the proceedings; by all the rights of precedence and custom he should be scrambling up the path ahead of his mistress ready to salute her at the top with a welcoming bark. He

did not understand, but he did not like the complexion of things in the least.

David broke through his thicket of embarrassment and said: "Would—would you mind kissing me good-by, too, Nora?" His face slowly burned red at his request.

For answer Nora turned and kissed him, and the color of her face was the color of his. It made her angry to feel this way with David; she always felt so thoroughly at ease with him.

So she said nothing more, but climbed up the cliff path, taking the first few steps slowly and then, suddenly, starting to run as rapidly as she could. She did not once look back, although David had counted on her doing so.

Finally when she had vanished, he sat down on the beach, holding the struggling Pip in his arms. "Don't you care, Pippins," he whispered. "She 'll be back. It's only a winter, Pippins—only a long, long winter."

But Pip, realizing at last his struggles were entirely superfluous, merely gazed at David with reproachful eyes that seemed to say, "It is n't fair, David—honest, it is n't."

And David agreed with him.

CHAPTER IV

NEXT June, the year following, David received this letter. It was the first letter he had ever received:

Dear David:

I'm not coming down to Bay Ridge this summer. Mother has decided to take a cottage at Far Rockaway.

I have often thought of last summer and the good times we had. I wonder whether we would have as good times this summer even if I did come. I've grown quite a lot. I'm almost two inches taller and even thinner than I was. Mother said to Colonel Craig that I was a fright and he said something about the ugly duckling. Of course I knew what he meant. I do think I'll be beautiful some day. Of course mother is beautiful, but I don't want to be beautiful in that way. I'll have brown skin and dark hair, and I hope I'll stay thin, even skinny. Mother is always worrying about getting fat, and always doing things to keep her weight down except give up candy and pastry, which are just what's making her fat.

This is an awfully long letter for me. I'm awfully sorry I'm not coming down. I thought about it nearly all last night after mother told me. How is Pip? Give him my love—you, too.

Yours truly,

NORA DAVENPORT.

The letter arrived in the morning. David read it, and then taking Pip down the beach, read it again aloud to him. Pip always pricked up his ears at the mention of Nora's name, and stared you straight in the eyes, and now David tried to make him understand by saying, "Nora, no! Not this summer, Pip!" and by shaking his head, but it is doubtful if Pip quite comprehended what it was all about, although he looked properly dejected and discouraged.

Then David walked farther along the beach with his hands in his pockets and Pip at his heels. He had counted a great deal on Nora's return. He did not realize how much until this letter put his hopes to flight. He had often thought about it and pictured her coming down the cliff path to meet him, swinging her sailor hat, her lips parted, the familiar little wrinkle between her straight eyebrows. The winter had seemed nothing more than an interval preparatory to her return. There were so many things he had planned to tell her, so many things which he did not understand, which puzzled him exorbitantly, and which he would have liked to discuss with her.

For one thing there were his father and mother. A great wonder had arisen in him this winter, or at least the wonder had taken form this winter, as to why his father and mother had ever married.

They were so ridiculously unsuited to each other—his big, gruff father, loud of voice, red, boisterous, smacking of the sea and of the common people who toiled and labored all their lives; and his mother, quiet, with her soft voice and gentle speech, which only served to emphasize her inflexible demeanor and the straining of her eyes which always looked as if they had seen things lost never to be recovered. David did not understand it; he would have liked to have talked it over with Nora. He did not think it would be disloyal to his parents. Talking it over with Nora would be like thinking it over by himself—no more treasonable than that.

He came to a halt before the string of rocks that ran out into the bay. He had changed this past year, he thought. He felt a little contemptuous of his former self; the self of the fairy stories and the pool-digging; he was now reading Dickens, Scott, and Bulwer-Lytton. He had also read a few of Dumas' novels. He no longer even enjoyed the books of boys' adventures which formerly had so excited him. He was no longer a child—childhood had left him this past winter. And the long winter evenings, spent before the driftwood fire in the kitchen, had been devoted to wondering about Nora and himself, life and the world. . . .

Nora had changed too, he thought. He tried to

picture her grown thinner and two inches taller. But he could only see her as she looked when she said good-by to him that afternoon last September, gazing at him seriously and holding out her small freckled hand.

He answered her letter that night. In his reply he told her how sorry he was that she was not coming to Bay Ridge that summer; also he told her a great deal about Pip; how he had been in several fights with a big yellow dog from up the Shore Road and how he had come out victorious, but with a permanently disfigured ear, and also that he had grown heavier but cleverer than ever. But when he sent the letter he felt it was a very sorry affair, containing altogether too much about Pip and altogether too little about how disappointed he, David, was because he would not see her that summer.

He waited for an answer from day to day, but possibly she never received it—at any rate, he never had a reply.

His hopes flew to the next summer but the Davenports did not return to Bay Ridge, nor did they the following summer. Several years passed and he heard no more from Nora.

Meanwhile the uneventful but restless, strangely disturbed years of his adolescence lay upon him. They were occupied by school, by reading, by go-

ing out on fishing trips with his father, by groping through a labyrinth of dark ideas and sensations, by endless questionings . . .

Each year David gained different ideas, discarding his old ones as he discarded his old, worn-out clothes. As he looked back upon these years afterwards, there were only two impressions that remained distinct with him. They stood out like white sails on an empty sea. One was the loss and the constant thought of Nora, who represented all of woman and almost all of friend he had ever known. And the other was the Great Dream.

The Dream had crept in upon him formlessly almost while he was still a child, even before he knew Nora. It had stayed with him and grown and gained body and soul as he grew. Sitting out on the rocks from which you could see the City rising white and majestic from the sea, the Dream became clearest and most real to him. And at night, with the stars shining overhead, or with the rain whipping in his face, he trudged along the shore with dear old Pip silently following and the Dream took possession of him so that he was hardly conscious of where he walked or how the night lengthened or whether the wind blew cold or hot. He lost himself in his dream.

What was this Dream? It is almost impossible to describe it: it was so vague, so shadowy, so lack-

ing in semblance and form. It was the dream that Youth always dreams; Youth's compact with the future, hidden in rosy clouds. It was like a poem that is never written or a song that is never sung. It was as beautiful as moonlight on water and as intangible; as musical as a breeze in a pine tree and as fleeting. It was the eternal and unreal dream of Youth conquering the world, Youth that does not know where it goes nor why. Only one thing was clear to David and that was that this dream was to help his fellow men in some way, make them happier, kinder, more charitable to one another.

Sometimes it did take shape. For a little while, for instance, David thought of becoming a preacher. He fancied religion would furnish him a tool with which to fashion his dream into form. He became a passionate Christian. He went to church every Sunday morning and evening; when the minister spoke from his pulpit David swayed with his words; when the Revivalists called for converts he stumbled down the aisle and knelt at the altar, weeping, torn with remorse for he knew not what; once or twice he stole into the church alone in the afternoon when it was dim and deserted, and there on his knees prayed to be shown the light, the path, prayed for faith and righteousness; mumbling phrases that reflected the minis-

ter's sermons, phrases coined two thousand years ago, of whose meaning he was almost ignorant.

But suddenly, after a year or two, this fervor deserted him as abruptly as it had come. An incident hastened its departure.

He discovered an unfortunate girl, a silly child of startled eyes and red lips; he had known her at school, and somehow she was led to confess her trouble to him. He in all confidence went to the minister, and the minister, an eminently respectable and incompetent man, hemmed and hawed and finally said he would see what could be done—of course the matter must be gone into carefully—it was very sad . . . There was a delay. Meanwhile the girl disappeared, God alone knows where. And for many years after that, despite his mother's protests, David did not enter a church.

But the Great Dream still remained, although it had been shaken; it came to possess him more completely than ever. For a time it had taken a side path, but it was in the highway again triumphant. Yet it never took definite shape. Whether he was to send forth his message in a book or in a wonderful poem, or whether he was simply to go out and spend his days working for the happiness of the poor in the City, he could never decide. But he had no doubt that time would bring the solution.

Out on the rocks he sat often of afternoons with

his eyes on the City and his thoughts wrapped around him like a warming blanket. In a book he had read of a great man who had come to a famous city; they had thrown open the gates to him, beautiful girls had spread flowers in his path, and the Lord Mayor had given him the keys of the City. The keys of the City! It had a magic ring, that phrase. David could not forget it. It seemed to him that some day he was to be given the keys to the City, that wonderful city over the waters raising its proud head to the very heavens.

Then, in the midst of these dreams, violently, like a blow between the eyes, came the shock of his father's death.

The equinoctial storms arrived late that September and they were preceded by many long, calm, sleeping days of mirrored skies and water. It was a season in which bluefish were scarce and David and his father went greater distances out to sea than they had ever ventured before. Then school commenced (David was going to high school in Brooklyn by now) and John Wells went on his fishing trips alone.

David came back from school one afternoon about half-past four to find low, ragged, dirty clouds scudding across the shuddering sky and the wind blowing so that the trees and bushes on the cliff bowed low beneath its force. An occasional

bird swept startled and shrieking through the air.

In the morning when he had left the sky had been as blue and the bay as calm as it had been for weeks, but now, at last, the equinoctial storms were arriving.

His mother did not answer his call as he entered the little red house; going outside he found her on the wharf gazing out to sea, her skirts blowing and flapping around her in the wind, her hand shielding her eyes. She reminded David of a painting he had seen recently in the Brooklyn Art Museum where he had spent a few of his afternoons. It was entitled "The Sailor's Wife," and his mother stood there now in the same position as the woman was shown standing in the picture.

When he put his hand on her arm and looked at her questioningly, she told him his father had, as usual, gone out for his second trip about twelve o'clock as soon as he had delivered some orders on the Hill and had finished his lunch. Even then the sky threatened but the big man had merely laughed—she could not reason with him.

David stood beside his mother on the wharf until the rain came. Staten Island was blotted out by its flood. Even the waves in the sheltered little cove tumbled and raced angrily upon the beach. Outside, in the open bay, the waters tore and

boiled and the waves threw their white crest slanting, high in the air like beautiful mad women; the whole air was full of flying salt spray until the two, standing on the dock, seemed lost in an insane whirl of water and howling wind—there was nothing else. But they stayed there, holding fast to each other, until darkness came and the rain swept down in blinding, wind-driven sheets.

“He’s put in at Staten Island,” said David, when finally he had drawn his mother indoors.

But she looked at him with strange, unbelieving eyes.

They ate no dinner. About ten o’clock, when the storm was at its worst, Mrs. Wells insisted on building a huge fire of kerosene-soaked driftwood. They started it beneath the shed on the iron mat pulled from beneath the parlor stove, but as soon as the blazing pile was placed out on the wharf where it could be seen from the bay, the waves and the rain leaped to put it out.

David went to bed at midnight, but he could not sleep. He thought of his father out there in the rushing waters, in his small, pitifully unfit boat, and still more he thought of his mother and of her behavior to-night. He could not but help think of a woman harassed by remorse. And then suddenly he saw his father, as he had seen him many times, approach his mother and try to put his

arm around her waist, or to kiss her only to be repulsed. . . .

He knew his mother was still downstairs at the window watching. He could not understand her. She did not love his father. A thousand things had shown that. And now here she was, with hard, staring eyes and trembling lips.

David lay in bed and puzzled over it as he had puzzled many times. He tossed restlessly. After an hour he decided to go down and persuade his mother to go to bed.

He found the kitchen and bedroom empty; the stove was red and a pot of coffee was boiling on it. But his mother was nowhere to be seen. He opened the door and when his eyes became accustomed to the darkness, he saw her standing out on the wharf again in the wind and the rain, gazing out to sea. He called to her but she did not hear him. He slipped a rubber coat of his father's over his night shirt, drew on a pair of rubber boots, and went out to her. He had to draw her forcibly into the house. But she would not go to bed.

David decided to wait downstairs with her and, pulling a large chair in from the parlor, he placed it in front of the stove and threw himself into it. But he fell asleep and slept until dawn and then awakened to find her still sitting at the window

with the pale gray daylight outside and the coffee still boiling on the stove.

His father never returned . . .

They found his dory smashing itself to bits in the surf beyond Fort Hamilton and, later, they learned that he had put in at Staten Island and had gone to the Inn where he occasionally stayed, but after a few hours of drinking he had disappeared. His cronies did not realize until too late that in half drunken egotism and courage he had made good his boast to take his small boat out to sea in defiance of the storm, because, as he said, he did not want the wife and the boy to worry.

His father's death swung David squarely before the enormous problem of his future.

CHAPTER V

AFTER his father's death David continued to go to school for a week or two, until one Sunday he and his mother had a long talk regarding his future and what he was to do now to prepare for it.

Mrs. Wells had evidently been premeditating this talk. She was ready with a host of suggestions and explanations.

"Now, David," she began, as soon as they were seated in the parlor to which she had led the way in a formal fashion, "we must consider that I have my personal income of about five hundred dollars. Aside from that we have nothing. It isn't enough to help you through college as I would like to do. We may be able to scrape along so that you can finish high school. But you are seventeen now—almost a man. The question is, Would n't it be better to have you start in business immediately? You have two years more at high school—in business they would mean considerable progress."

"I could earn some money by fishing after-

noons, and with the money we get letting out boats on Saturdays and Sundays—" suggested David.

Mrs. Wells drew herself together; a set look came into her face—a look of determination. "We 're through with that," she said, "entirely through with it—that part of our life is finished. I don't want you to have anything to do with fish and boats,"—suddenly her voice changed—"Oh, my son," she cried, "if you knew how it has made me suffer—how it has broken me! I hate this place! I've always hated it! And these people! I'm depending on you to enable us to get away from here. I'm praying for your success. We must go where this isn't known, where we can take our proper place as gentle-folk."

David was very much moved. "I'll do anything you say, Mother"; and awkwardly, because she had never awakened these feelings in him before, he came over and knelt beside her; he put his hand over hers. After a moment, however, she stooped and kissed him quickly and said: "Now go back to your seat and we'll talk the thing over more sensibly."

David, abashed, arose and returned to his chair.

There was a short pause, during which his mother seemed to be gathering together and rearranging the sequence of her thoughts.

“What business or profession have you thought about?” she finally asked.

David had, as a matter of fact, never thought about any; of course his Great Dream was really his purpose in life, but he could not explain this wonderful dream to the silent and stern woman sitting opposite him even though she was his mother.

“I—I have n’t thought about anything in particular,” he said, realizing that the admission made a sorry figure of him.

“I wish you were more practical,” remarked Mrs. Wells with a sigh, “but I can’t blame you. I have always been very practical—very—but at a crucial moment, in a moment of madness, I threw all my common sense to the winds!” She knitted her brows and sat with her fingers plucking at the coarse cheap stuff of her mourning dress. Presently she resumed, in a manner that suggested she spoke reluctantly of these things: “I have a brother who is a lawyer, but I don’t like to ask favors of him unless it’s absolutely necessary.”

“My uncle a lawyer!” David burst out. To the fisherman’s son it was almost as if some one had announced to him that his uncle was one of Scott’s heroes or the Duke of Westminster.

His mother frowned at his enthusiasm. “He is a very famous lawyer and a very hard man. I

doubt whether he would help you, but if you wish very much to study law, I might see him."

"If I studied law I 'd have to know more Latin, I think," said David eagerly. "That would mean two more years at high school."

"I have a cousin who is in the insurance business," went on Mrs. Wells, ignoring David's last remark, as if she herself had considered and passed on the question of his becoming a lawyer. "He is secretary of a big company on Wall Street. Probably you 'd do better there."

The name "Wall Street" called forth David's instant interest. He had of late read and heard a great deal of Wall Street. It seemed marvelous careers in finance and adventure (with which you could surely link up altruism) awaited almost every youth who once got a foothold in that miraculous street.

"I should like that!" he exclaimed.

"Very well," replied his mother, pleased this time at his eagerness, "I shall write Henry tomorrow and ask for an interview."

David, carried out of his usual reserve, felt that now was the time to confess to his mother his Great Dream; it boiled within him and burned to be told, but when he began confusedly in broken sentences, his mother raised a protesting hand. "I wish you would leave me alone, David. This

stirring up of old memories, of people I have tried to forget, has been very painful. I should like to be alone awhile."

So David whistled to Pip, who was never allowed in the parlor, and the two of them went down the beach. When they reached the point where you could see the big white house which the Davenports had occupied that eventful summer, he stopped and gazed up at it. Another family from New York had rented it the past season—a family which flowered in white-flanneled youths. But none of them had noticed David; on the beach and on the Shore Road above they had passed him as unconscious of his presence as if he did not exist. One day one of the girls, a black-haired, slim girl, dropped a white ribbon and David picked it up and ran after her with it. She thanked him prettily with a smile that reminded him of Nora.

He thought of this incident now as he stood below, gazing up at the white house. He pretended Nora was up there and that he was going up to see her and tell her he was to start in business in Wall Street and that his uncle was a lawyer, and a cousin, secretary of a big insurance company. He had often dreamed of Wall Street out there on the rocks—Wall Street and Broadway and Fifth Avenue, and other famous streets. He pretended he was walking upon them now, and Nora was beside

him, and everybody turned to look after Nora and to envy him.

The cliff path was lined with a few late wild asters and scattered stalks of golden-rod with the bloom gray with age. They made him think of the last time he had seen Nora when she said good-by to him on this spot where he was now standing. Suddenly he found pretending a mighty empty and unsatisfactory sort of game—so he walked on along the beach.

Pip, who was getting fat and old, began to limp, a trick of his when tired. David picked him up. "Come on, old Pippins," he said, rubbing Pip's ear, "we 'll go out on the rocks and rest until supper time. We 'll dream, old Pippins—that 's what we 'll do. And don't you care because you 're getting old, Pip. I 'll soon give you a gold cushion and ice cream like the little girl in the rhyme, don't you remember? Ice cream every day, you old glutton of a Pip, and sausage and chocolate and you 'll see Nora again before you die. Yes, you will, I 'll promise you that. For it 's Wall Street, Pip; it 's business; it 's being as good as anybody else; it 's taking us back to Nora; it 's doing all sorts of good to all sorts of people—that 's what it is, Pippins."

But when they got out on the rocks, Pip, despite all this enthusiasm, promptly and quite phleg-

matically went to sleep, his black muzzle on his master's knee, and left David to dream alone.

On Thursday, Mrs. Wells received an answer to her letter to her cousin, saying to bring David to the office the following Monday and after an interview he would be able to decide whether he could find him a position in the office or not; that, of course, it would have to be a very modest position to begin with—all the employees had to start from the bottom; it depended entirely upon themselves how rapidly they worked their way up; that they had so many applications, and so forth. There it ended very abruptly with a curt and crisp, "Yours truly, Henry Stanton."

Friday, David went to high school for the last time. He could not feel very much regret at leaving; he had few intimate friends there; he was eager to take up the new life, the business life. He did not like abandoning some of his studies, French and German, political economy and English, but he found comfort in thinking he would continue them by himself.

Saturday, his mother bought him a new suit of ready-made clothes with other furnishings—a new tie and boots and a smart, brown Derby hat. On Monday morning she inspected him very carefully in his new finery, turning him around several times

while she studied the details of his appearance. The scrutiny satisfied her. "Yes, you 'll do, David," she said. "You already look almost like the grandson of a gentleman—a few more years and there 'll be no traces of fish and of letting out boats on Sunday."

David was absurdly pleased at her approval. He threw a surreptitious glance at himself in the mirror; his new blue suit certainly was the best he had ever had; he thought he looked as well as any of the white-flanneled youths of whom he had caught a glimpse on their way to the City yesterday.

Mrs. Wells, too, this Monday morning, was most carefully and elegantly attired. She had on a black silk dress which, although even to David's unpractised eye looked decidedly out of style, was of a very rich and heavy sheen; a fine lace collar beautifully yellow with age was around her neck and an oval gold brooch held it together—an oval brooch with a pink and white cameo in its center.

They left the little red house at half-past eight and taking the trolley and the ferry from Hamilton Avenue, arrived silent and excited at the offices of the Inland Casualty Company a few minutes before ten. These offices were in a great granite building that was lofty but unimpressive. But the offices themselves were all that one could

possibly expect. They had walls of white marble. Placed at intervals huge columns of marble, streaked and flecked with blue and orange lines, supported the ceiling, and there was much gilt iron work and shining mahogany. The splendor of it took David's breath away; the only thing that he had ever seen that compared with it was the statuary room of the Brooklyn Art Museum.

A well-dressed youth with deferential manners took Mrs. Wells' name to the secretary of the company, Mr. Henry Stanton, her cousin.

After a short wait, they were ushered into a small bare office with a huge desk, at which sat a thin nervous man with eyeglasses and with his hair parted with extreme nicety in the exact center of his head.

"How do you do, Henry?" said David's mother composedly, holding out her hand and apparently oblivious of the fact that she had not seen her cousin in fifteen years.

"How do you do, Jane," said Mr. Stanton, rising from his chair and pulling another chair forward for her with an impatient, abrupt motion. Then he turned to David. "So this is your son?"

Mrs. Wells nodded and David felt his hand quickly seized and then dropped. He pretended to appear at ease, but he felt a lump rise in his

throat when he attempted to speak and he did not know where to put his hands.

The interview was short. Mr. Stanton fired several brief and, what seemed to David, irrelevant questions at him and then rang a bell.

"Send Mr. Keep to me," he demanded of the boy who answered the summons.

Mr. Keep appeared. "This is my cousin's son, David Wells, of whom I spoke to you, Keep. He is ready to start work at once."

David was led out to a large room of many desks over which dozens of clerks were bending, busily writing. Mr. Keep showed him where to put his hat and coat and then led him to a desk on which were piled stacks of cards. His duties, it was explained, consisted in arranging the cards alphabetically and then placing them in a cabinet of drawers that stood directly in back of him.

In a very few minutes David understood the requirements. Mr. Keep nodded approvingly and left him. Several times during the day he reappeared, but David needed no assistance. At half-past twelve he was told he could have an hour off for lunch.

Thus his business career began in Wall Street at seven dollars a week.

From the very first his work was a tremendous

disappointment to David. He had expected romance and discovered routine; he had looked for adventure and found drudgery. For the life of him, try as he would, he could take no interest in handling and sorting stacks of cards all day. These cards contained the names and addresses of policy holders, and sometimes David sat and wondered what the owners of the names were like—he would try to picture people who corresponded to the names. It was while he was in one of these reveries that Mr. Stanton, who, unknown to David, had been watching him, said sternly: “You ’ll have to do better than that, David. Work faster. Put some ginger into your work.”

David flushed guiltily. For a few days after that he worked hard but before long he fell back into his desultory ways. He dreamed and thought of the time when he would be able to do something that really mattered, that was really important.

What did interest him, however, was his trip between the City and Bay Ridge night and morning and the plunge into the crowded city streets at noon. He liked to feel himself one of a million workers. He liked to rush along with the crowds and feel that he had a place here—a very tiny place in the huge city.

Often he went without lunch so that he could go down to the Battery and walk along the sea wall

and watch the immigrants arrive, swarthy Italians with rings in their ears and stolid powerful Germans with tight coats and short, mussy-looking trousers, and Russian Jews with hope sparkling in their eyes; or so that he could explore South Street and wander out on the docks and see the cargoes the sailing vessels brought in, wondering from what strange countries they came. He also liked to walk along lower Washington Street and gaze in the windows of the Armenian shops where laces, gorgeously embroidered wraps, and weird smoking implements set him dreaming of Aladdin and of the Thousand and One Tales; occasionally he followed the crooked windings of Pearl Street and pretended to identify the old, gable-roofed buildings as belonging to worthies of New Amsterdam—in which of course, he knew he was wrong, but would not admit it.

Meanwhile the card sorting went on in a lamentable manner. The world was so full of wonder, and cards bore such a meager relation to it all. David hungered for the day when he could do big things in business. Then he told himself he would be able to prove his value. But now there was the tediousness of waiting. . . .

When the first of the year arrived David found to his intense surprise and delight that his salary was raised to ten dollars a week; also he was pro-

moted from sorting cards to the bookkeeper's desk where he made various entries regarding policy holders in a large book with a red leather cover.

At first, he was interested in the new work, but eventually it became as monotonous as the card-sorting.

A year later his salary was again raised but he was still kept at the high desk, writing the same things over and over in another large book with a red leather cover. The only advantage of the endless repetition was that it became so mechanical he did not have to think of it. He could send his thoughts where he willed—he could dream to his heart's content.

Then came the spring again. His father had been dead a year and a half, and he had been going to business all that time with the woeful progress shown. But the year and a half had meant great progress in other ways than in business.

The slim boy was becoming a man; his shoulders and chest were broadening, expanding. Sometimes, standing in front of the mirror of his little room, drawing in deep breaths, through the open window, as a physical culture magazine directed, he wondered boastfully if his strength were equal to his father's. He began, too, to pay attention to his personal appearance, to select his scarfs with care, to wear his clothes jauntily, to

see that his shoes were always well polished. He even went so far as to invest two months' savings in a suit at Brokaw Brothers, a shop which a companion at the office assured him was the only place in town for a young fellow to buy his clothes. Mrs. Wells' horror at his extravagance was lessened by her pride in his gentility. She told him once that he greatly resembled her father. That pleased him immensely, for Mrs. Wells had a daguerreotype of her father which showed a proud, eager face above a black silk stock and a snowy frill of shirt.

So David, after these months in the City, was on the surface no longer the raw youth. The stamp of the town was upon him. While underneath there was still the mass of guileless questionings, the dreams, and the fancies, these, too, were passing. The knowledge that lies in wait in the City streets was reaching out for him, the traps that life sets for the unwary were awaiting him.

He remembered the shock one night when walking along a West Side street; he at last realized what a woman who spoke to him wanted. When she stopped him he thought she was going to ask to be directed somewhere . . . and he had bent an attentive ear. He had hardly known before that such things existed . . . of course he had realized it vaguely . . . but not in that way—that sordid,

commonplace, horrible way. He shook his head at her and passed on with a curious burning sensation in his throat; he walked for blocks and blocks before the grip the thing had taken on him vanished. Afterwards he had guarded against such encounters but all the time he was filled with a wild curiosity and a strange dread.

Yes, David changed in that year and a half—changed greatly.

One Saturday afternoon in May when the office force of the Inland Casualty Company was granted a half-holiday, David journeyed home, ate his lunch, and then calling Pip, started to walk along the Shore Road.

They passed the white house and David saw the windows were open and there was an air of expectancy about the place; people were moving down for the summer. Again David thrilled—perhaps now, at last, it was the Davenports again. But he had been disappointed too often to watch and wait.

He walked down the road farther and stood leaning on the fence that serves as a guard rail to prevent horses going over the cliff which falls steeply from the road at this point. It was a clear day—the sky showed a few tumbled clouds that faintly suggested the pinnacles and roofs of a fairy city; the water sparkled, the beach lay

like a silver crescent in the sun. David gazed at the water and thought of Nora and of business and of how bitterly disappointed he was in it and of his Great Dream and of life and of the women he passed in the street—of all of these things he thought in a muddled, fragmentary way.

Suddenly he was aroused by a voice saying between laughter and tears, “David, hello!—and Pip, too! I was just coming down to look for you! Oh, dear old Pip, but aren’t you fat!”

David swung around with a sob in his throat.

It was Nora.

CHAPTER VI

“**N**OW first,” said Nora, perceiving instantly that David was shaken and husky-voiced and uncomfortable at her sudden appearance; “now first,” she said, striving to put him at his ease, “let ’s look each other over carefully and see just how much we ’ve changed.”

“You ’re changed entirely!” cried David after a minute or two, during which he took in all the charm and loveliness of her, the soft dark hair braided around her head, the gray eyes sparkling and yet a little wistful, the firm red lips. “You ’re not at all as I remember you. You ’re entirely grown up.”

“Well, for that matter, you ’re grown up, too, David. But somehow you have n’t changed; I ’d have known you anywhere.”

“Are you down for the summer?”

Nora nodded; her face clouded for an instant. “Yes, mother and father and Colonel Craig decided we might as well come down here again. It ’s so convenient to the City. We ’ve been all over creation since that summer, David—we went

to Europe two years ago. Oh, I 'm quite finished now—I 'm ready for society—" a shadow again crossed her face—"the sort of society we get."

"Nora, I 've started in business," said David.

"Oh, I 'm so glad!" exclaimed Nora. She made him tell her all about it. It started with his father's death. "I always loved him—he was so—so *real*," put in Nora.

They sat down on the grass on the edge of the cliff with Pip between them, his head cocked appreciatively as Nora fondled his ears. David in his recital of his business career varnished matters over a trifle. His vanity would not permit him to tell the exact truth. But soon they had exhausted business and they commenced talking of the long summer of their childhood—the summer which each decided was the happiest of their lives.

"What a wild little beast I was," said Nora. "I don't think I 've improved much; of course naturally I 'm more self-possessed and quiet and very young ladylike, but beneath it there 's the same old independence, and the running and rushing and climbing and shouting. How we used to race around—do you remember the raft? And how we used to make up stories?"

"Don't you still make them up?" he asked anxiously.

“Yes, I do,” she admitted, “but it is n’t as much fun as it once was.”

“Yes, it is. I know. The only difference is it ’s another kind of making believe—it ’s bigger; it means more.”

She gave him a quick glance. “Oh, David, you ’re such a dear—such a silly old kind of a dear. And after the people I ’ve been thrown with—women who think of nothing but men, and men who—oh, just the rottenest old set of men. . . . Why, David, do you know it might be only yesterday that we sat here together as children and wondered about the ships that sailed by and threw stones at bottles in the water and lay back on the grass and made up stories about the clouds . . . I feel I know you just as well.”

He looked at her a little shyly. “At first I thought you were going to be different,” he said, “you look so—so elegant and proud; I was awfully afraid, Nora, but when you began to talk—it was all right—it was just all right. Was n’t it, Pippins?”

Pip wagged his tail enthusiastically—it certainly appeared perfectly all right to him. . . .

They saw each other frequently during the summer days that followed, and they tried to pretend they were on the same footing they had been as children but impalpably, inexorably walking like

a ghost between them, shadowy but distinct, was the change the years had brought about. Nora was no longer a child but a woman and David was no longer a child but a man. They were not on the same footing toward each other and even while they pretended they knew they were not. The old freedom of glance and of action was gone. Yet for a time they were successful in keeping up the pretense.

Among the guests that now came to the Davenport house were younger men who came to see Nora. There was one man especially but he was not so young. David met Nora walking with him one day on the Shore Road and he was introduced to him. He was a Mr. Walter Bradford. David felt quite awkward before him. He was so splendidly dressed and carried such an air of distinction. He had a heavy, handsome face with a crisp blond mustache turned up at the ends and large, heavy-lidded eyes, and his deep voice gave utterance to his words so crisply, so authoritatively.

David saw Nora with him often. He saw them riding together, walking together, and one day when he stayed home from business with a cold, he heard their voices below, and then later from his window saw them far out on the bay. Mr. Bradford was rowing and Nora was sitting quite

still in the boat, her hands folded, evidently listening to him. Occasionally he stopped rowing and rested on his oars, leaned towards her. . . . David's paper card house of pretense fell to pieces; he knew from that moment that he loved Nora with a love that was entirely different from his childhood love; it was friendship, perhaps, but it was friendship that flamed and desired. With it was a great humility—he knew that he had no right ever to speak to Nora of his love—that she would never listen to him.

He could no longer bear the sight of her out there with the other man. He threw himself back in the bed and lay glowering up at the ceiling with its white paper silvered with tiny stars. With all the ardor of his awakened love he wished that he were a child again, with a child's easily satisfied wants and desires.

The next time he met Nora he asked her to go rowing with him.

"Any time you ask me," she answered readily.

"We'll go to-morrow afternoon, then," said David, for to-morrow was Saturday when he had his half holiday.

All this time David was still busy with his Dream—his Dream to do something for his fellow men. Ever since Nora's return he had been awaiting a suitable opportunity to tell her about

it. During the past winter he had decided that he might become a poet and, night after night, he had sat in his little room writing endless, formless rhymes. He tried to pack so much of his dream stuff into them that they were quite meaningless but, out of the mass of them, he had at last evolved one which showed, he believed, something of what he was capable of doing. It ran two full pages of fool's cap and the rhymes at the end of the lines were quite perfect. It bore the title, "The World and I," and it began, "The world is a wide, wide plain and I a spirit must slay to set it free."

Saturday afternoon when he and Nora went rowing he took this poem with him. When they were some distance from the shore he let the boat rest in the current, and after explaining the Dream to Nora he read her what he had written.

But she took the papers from him, tore them in half, and threw them into the water. "David, that's rot!" she cried. "You're becoming obsessed with that idea. You don't want dreams. You want life. There's nothing in that—nothing to make men happy. It's vague, it's formless, it's chaotic. Forgive me! but I can't let you go on in that way; you ought to see the reality, not the dream."

David was dumbfounded, embittered. He watched his beloved poem over which he had

toiled for weeks, the only fruit of his years of dreams, go floating away on the waters. At first he was going to jump after it and rescue it. But Nora's words arrested him. Finally he turned to her and said in a colorless voice: "It was only roughly done. It did n't give you any idea of what I'm going to do—do you hear? Of what I'm *going* to do some day, Nora!"

Nora shook her head. "I don't know, David," she said. "You're trying to get at things backwards. After you've worked and worked and lived and loved and suffered—especially after you've suffered—then maybe you can put it into form. But now—you have n't lived—you have n't worked—you have n't suffered—your whole life has been a dream!"

"How do you understand these things?" he asked incredulously.

Nora hesitated. "I don't know, David. They seem to come to a woman before they do to a man. It just seems to be instinct with me. I see you wrapped up in this Dream of yours and the only thing that will bring you out of it is suffering. Oh, I see you broken, David—broken by suffering, but then after that I see you live!"

David picked up the oars and rowed on, puzzling over Nora's words. He did not comprehend them entirely. He had not worked nor lived nor

suffered. But he loved! He knew that now. He knew it with all his heart and soul and body. And yet he could not tell Nora that he loved her. Perhaps that was how he was going to suffer. He wondered if she loved the man Bradford. Suddenly the words rose to his lips despite himself, and leaning forward he threw them at her passionately:

“Are you in love with Bradford?”

Nora did not answer immediately. She flushed and was vividly conscious of her flush. “He’s married,” she said presently.

David said nothing and after a silence, she asked, “Why?”

“You seem to be fond of him,” muttered David, bending over the oars and sending the boat forward with a jump.

Nora hesitated; then, without looking at him she began quietly, “I’m going to be frank with you, David. I’ve learned a lot the last few years. I can’t help it if I’ve become a little cynical and hard. You know the men and women who come to our house are not—very respectable. They’re a gay, light-hearted lot. Some are clever and all that, but each of them has—a flaw. They’re not first class. I’ve become used to them. But one—always has to be on one’s guard.”

David looked at her in surprise. He did not

know where her words were leading, and what she said was in itself a surprise. The Davenports had always moved in a society so far above anything he had ever known that he thought criticism impossible.

Nora continued: "I've always thought of you as you were that summer, David—oh, it was foolish of me. You had to change, to become a man. But I've always thought of you as a friend—a loyal old friend. I've always liked to think I could bank upon you. But now, you too are changing—even more—than you ought. You're jealous. I saw it in the way you spoke about Mr. Bradford. Oh, I want you as a friend—with all that other sort of thing left out. Don't—don't you think you can be?"

They gazed at each other steadily for several seconds—tears of whose presence they were unconscious stood in their eyes. At last David dropped his gaze. "I think I can, Nora," he said.

"Let's shake on it."

They shook hands while the boat rocked; they shook hands seriously, unsmilingly. Then David rowed back to the shore.

And during the rest of that summer, during their many walks in which they discussed books and life and each other with remarkable freedom, David did not betray by word or glance that he

loved Nora the more with every day of his life.

But betrayal came. It thrust itself upon them the day in September when they took their long swim together and when David, in an unguarded moment, let his heart speak.

They had planned and prepared for this swim all summer. Midway between the Bay Ridge and Staten Island shores there is a submerged rock, and by the rock a bell-buoy swings. David made a point of swimming out there once each summer. When he told Nora about it she insisted that she was going to swim with him that year. And the preparation and the practising followed.

Finally the Sunday morning they had decided upon arrived.

It was six o'clock. The sun had already been up for some time. It threw long, blue shadows on the beach and the air sang of morning. The sea lay before them calmer than they had ever seen it before, they thought. It looked cool, pale green and so softly inviting that it seemed to be extending caressing arms to them.

They walked down silent to the water's edge; the tide was going out. Nora slipped off her cloak and stood forth in her bathing suit, laughing, shaking her head in the morning breeze. Youth and the morning, the buoyant air and the sunlight, centered in her.

“It ’s a long swim, is n’t it, David?” she asked, shading her eyes with her hand and peering across the water to where the bell-buoy rocked, hardly visible from here.

He nodded and looked at her questioningly; he thought possibly she was going to flunk.

“Well, then off comes this idiotic skirt,” she said. She unfastened it and with a deft throw landed it back on the beach with her cloak. Then she threw back her head, raised her arms and ran into the water like a spirit released.

“Come on, David,” she called, already in water up to her shoulders. “Come on! It ’s just right. We ’ll have to swim fast to keep warm.”

David plunged into the water after her. They were off! Their long strokes sent them forward rapidly; their hands splashed the water into pale green bubbles and they left little ripples of foam behind them. They swam close together, Nora on her right side, David on his left; they did not talk, but occasionally smiled into each other’s faces.

Midway Nora changed from the side to a breast stroke. “Tired?” asked David.

She shook her head, swam a short distance on her back, and then, rested, struck out again with the long over-hand stroke that David had taught her.

At last they reached the buoy and climbed upon it. It had a ledge running around it on which they sat, too winded to talk at first. They swung their legs to and fro over the side; the buoy rocked with the waves at intervals, the deep-toned bell rang over their heads, startlingly, with a weird sound. The shore hung low in the distance; water stretched its blue and green valleys all around them.

“A few years ago we ’d now be making believe we were shipwrecked on a desert island,” said Nora.

“If we only were!” exclaimed David.

Nora pretended she had not heard. Her hair had partly slipped down from beneath her crimson bathing cap and fell around her face. She took off the cap and began to wind her hair tightly around her head again. She caught David eyeing her, so she asked, smiling, “Well?”

“You look so—so funny, Nora—so absurd. I ’d like to gather you up in my arms and swim away with you forever.”

Nora immediately sobered. “Now, David!” she said. “You can’t begin that; you know you can’t. Remember our bargain. You ’ll spoil it all.”

But as she sat there still swinging her legs, her hands clasping the edge of the platform on which

they sat, her lips parted, and smiling in a secret little fashion to herself, her slim body outlined in the black clinging suit, David felt all his resolves and promises, all his carefully erected barriers, his humility and pride, swept away by an irresistible desire to touch her, to hold her in his arms, to press his lips against hers. "Nora!" he cried, "I love you! I can't help it! It's no use pretending—I know now it is n't. I want you to be my wife. Of course we're awfully young. But, oh Lord, how I'll work for you, Nora. I'll stop dreaming. I'll give you just as good a home as you have now."

Nora gave him a quick glance; her eyes were full of reproach and of pity. "Why did you say this now, David?" she cried. "Why now of all times! I did n't want this from you. You were to be my friend—my bully good friend—that's all—and it was enough. It is just what I needed—just what I needed now of all times."

David's thoughts flashed to Mr. Bradford. He did n't know why he thought of him at that moment, but there he was with his handsome, tanned face and his large, heavy eyes.

"I'm sorry I said anything, Nora; I'm awfully sorry. I meant to stick to our bargain. I've tried. But somehow things just gave way with me."

Nora arose to her feet. She held out her hand to David. "Here, I'm going to dive. Steady me."

When the next wave came along she plunged into its green depths and David was obliged to follow.

They swam silently back to the shore, more tired in body and soul than when they raced so gaily out into the morning. Now the sun was high and shone brazenly on the waters. Nora fagged toward the end; her overhand stroke with which she bravely started out failed her and she swam on her back, and then with the old primitive breast stroke. David offered her assistance, but she shut her lips tightly, shook her head, and labored on. At last their feet touched bottom, and Nora staggered up the beach and fell flat on the dry sand and lay there panting for a few minutes while David ran for her cape, skirt, and sandals.

Presently she stood up and put them on. Then she smiled. "Well, I did it, didn't I, David?" she said, giving him her hand. "No, please don't walk up with me. I'd rather go alone."

During the rest of that month he saw but little of her. He heard indirectly that the Davenports had decided to stay in Bay Ridge until after Thanksgiving Day. But he saw Nora herself only a few times on the Shore Road, and then all he

got from her was a brief nod and a smile. Sometimes he wondered bitterly if she was not purposely avoiding him. The bitterness was no less keen because he knew the reason why.

CHAPTER VII

THEN came that wild and eventful November night which was to remain vivid in David's memory all his life!

He looked out of the door after helping his mother clear away the supper dishes. There was a high, wet wind blowing and the waves howled like beasts of prey. At first he decided to put on his boots and oilskin and tramp along the beach as he often did in such weather, but the driftwood in the open fireplace beckoned invitingly. So he drew one of Stevenson's romances from the shelf on which he kept his few books and throwing himself into a big chair before the fire he read for an hour or two. But even the charm of "Prince Otto" could not keep him awake after ten o'clock. He kissed his mother good night and went to bed.

Upstairs in his little room the fury of the night was more evident. His window was shaken as if the wind would tear it from its frame. But a storm was too familiar to David to keep him from slumber long. . . .

It was almost two hours later that he was

aroused by noises so persistent and so unusual that they made themselves heard beneath the roar of the wind and the thunder of the waves. He sat up. Pebbles, one after another, were steadily hitting the pane of his window. He jumped from the bed and looked out. Dimly he could make out a cloaked figure standing below and at once he knew it was Nora.

He opened the window slightly and all the storm seemed to invade the room but he heard her call, "I must see you, David."

He pulled on his shoes, slipped on his coat and trousers and ran downstairs to the door. Nora was already awaiting him. She entered quickly, walked past him without looking at him, and went over to the fireplace, where she stood gazing down into the dying embers of the blaze.

"I want to talk with you alone, David," she said presently, without turning. "Where is your mother?"

"In bed long ago. She won't wake up."

Nora raised her head and he saw her face. She was not the Nora he knew. Something had changed her terribly. Her eyes were large and brilliant, they were like the eyes of a person suddenly shot from darkness into a brilliantly lighted room; there was something hectic and feverish in her entire appearance, in her agitated movements,

in the way her fingers plucked at her coat. She could not be quiet. It was as if a whip were on her shoulders, a whip that kept her moving up and down the room with short, quick steps. Once she threw herself into the large chair but immediately she was up pacing again. And David thought of a wounded white gull he had picked up on the beach once; he had imprisoned it in a crate but it had beaten its wings so madly against the bars that in order to save its life he had been forced to free it.

David did not speak to Nora. He did not know what to say. There were no prison bars he could let down for her. Yet he saw that she was in trouble, trouble as desperate as the wounded gull's.

Finally she lifted her eyes to his and said in a voice so even and subdued that it seemed utterly out of harmony with her appearance, "Do you remember when, years ago, the other children were not permitted to play with me?"

He nodded.

"I've just found out why."

But David could not find the words to question her.

"My mother is—" Nora checked herself so abruptly it seemed as if she had bitten off the rest of that sentence; in a minute she continued,

“Colonel Craig is my mother’s lover. I just found it out yesterday—I found it out in the most horrible way. It’s—killed me, David. It’s killed the Nora that was me and left some one else, some one I don’t understand.”—Her two hands flew to her throat and ripped the fastenings of her cloak apart so that her full, round throat was revealed.—“David, I’m on the rocks. I’m going to pieces.”

“Nora, dear!” cried David—and that was all he said, although he wanted so much to say more; he wanted to go to her and soften her; to erase this new and appalling hardness that had come over her; he wanted to caress her, to banish the open misery that stared forth from the pallor of her face. And he thought, “Oh, dear God, if you’ll only help me to make her weep!” But deeper than his desire to do these things was the knowledge that he must do none of them; that if he did she would leave him as abruptly as she had come.

“I don’t understand why I didn’t see it long ago,” Nora continued, in that unnaturally calm and even voice. “I suppose everybody in our crowd, in our rotten, fast crowd, knew it. He’s been paying for everything, David. Everything I own, everything I have, my clothes, my education, all from the man who—” She turned away again and now she threw back her head and, fever-

ishly, impatiently, pushed back the strands of dark hair that fell over her forehead. "You know what I'm like, David. You know how I've always hated things of that sort and how I've faced things with courage, held up my head because I thought I was so far out of that—muck! All the time this was waiting for me, waiting to pull me down into the mud!" She extended her arms with the hands, palms down on either side of her; she closed her eyes and shuddered.

David found his reluctant tongue. "It does n't matter to you, Nora, it 's not your fault. You can leave and go out and make your own life."

"Yes!" said Nora, "I can!"

He looked at her, alarmed. What did she mean? "You are going to leave?" was torn from him.

"To-night."

"How?"

"I am going with Walter Bradford."

"But he 's married?"

"What difference does that make to me—now?"

"Nora, you can't do this!" cried David. "You don't know what you 're saying. My God, Nora, you can't!"

"I must get away from home," she said quietly. "Don't imagine I have n't thought it all out, David. I've wept over it, wept as one weeps but once in a lifetime"— Her voice rose a little—

“Don’t you see I ’m mad to get away? Where else can I go? Don’t you see there ’s nothing else for me to do? I ’ve never been taught to support myself. I ’ve never been taught to do anything else than live with a man, earn my living in that way. What does it matter if I go as wife or mistress? What ’s the difference? There ’s no other way for me. And what does it matter what becomes of me now? I ’m outside the pale. I am—my mother’s child.”

“But your pride?”

“My pride!” she echoed bitterly and, for the first time, David realized what her suffering had been.

He went over and stood beside her. “There is something else—another way. You can come here and live with us, with my mother and myself. You can learn to do something for yourself. You can learn to become independent.”

For a moment she hesitated. “If only you had n’t said that you loved—” she began and stopped, arrested at the grief, the racked, quivering grief of his face.

“Nora, don’t say that!” he cried. “I could n’t help loving you, but don’t say it ’s helped bring this about. I won’t love you any more. I ’ll strip this love from me; I ’ll whip it out of myself. I ’ll swear that you ’ll never see it again.”

"But after all," she said a little wearily, "we're forgetting the most important thing of all."

"What is that?"

"That I love Walter Bradford and that he loves me."

There was a long silence. Outside the November wind blustered and splashed the window with raindrops that glistened as they ran down the panes; a bedraggled branch of evergreen kept beating with weary insistence against the shutter; far out on the bay they could hear the sirens blowing, and near by the anger of the waves dashing on the beach where they had played as children.

"I am going, David," said Nora at last, wrapping her cloak around her.

"You are going with him to-night?"

"The carriage will be up on the cliff at twelve. My bag is already there beside the road. I had to tell you before I went, David. I had to stand right with you if with no one else."

David slipped across to the door, locked it, and pulled out the key. "I am going to keep you here till dawn," he announced.

A smile trembled on Nora's lips; for the first time her face softened and tears visited her eyes. She went over to the chair he had taken and put her hand on his shoulder. "Oh, David, dear old

David," she murmured. "Don't you see that is n't the way to remedy it? Don't you see that I've got to work this out for myself in my own way? I'm no longer a child but a woman, and I can't be locked in like a child. It is n't so simple, so wonderfully simple as all that, David. You can lock my body in, but who holds the key of my soul? It's my soul that is going out to-night, David, out into the wind and the rain. It's going to seek light again, sunshine again. Pray for it, David, but don't try to imprison it."

David sank into the depths of his chair. He leaned over, his face buried against his sleeve. Without a word, his free hand held up the key to her.

She took it, hesitated, and stooping, kissed him. "David, if only I could love you. And I do—I love you better than any one in the world but not in the way you want, my dear."

She crossed over to the door and waited, but he neither looked up nor spoke. So she unlocked the door and stole out.

CHAPTER VIII

ON the gray monotone that was now David's life stood out one fact that became insistent. His mother was displeased with him. It worried him the more because her health was no longer what it had been. She was no longer the firm and vigorous personality that had ruled the household in his boyhood days. Very often now those tones that had been so full and inflexible became broken and querulous.

"I thought by now you 'd be making enough so we could leave here, David," she said to him one day. "I'm wondering if I'll ever leave this place before I die."

Thus David knew she was not satisfied with the progress he was making with the Inland Casualty Company. Indeed he was not satisfied himself. Entering names and figures into a large book with a red cover, day after day, week after week, month after month, was at best a stale and monotonous duty. He could not become interested in it. He had given up trying.

Six months ago under the stimulus of Nora Davenport's presence he had determined to find

another position which would employ his brain and not press him down to the level of an automaton. But he was hindered by the thought of his mother's disapproval and he also entertained a lingering hope that his cousin, Mr. Stanton, would come to his rescue. Then Nora had gone away with Walter Bradford and with her going left him inert, suffering, devoid of ambition or purpose. The trouble with David now was that he did not care about anything. He took his mother's disapproval without protest.

Each storm that winter seemed to leave its impress on Mrs. Wells. It was as if it stole through the tightly closed doors and windows of the little red house and buffeted and shook her. When eventually the first warm spring days came she eagerly welcomed them out on the veranda which faced the sea. But even the bright sunshine failed to warm her body grown so feeble and wax-white. David was obliged to prepare their simple meals almost entirely by himself while his mother sat by, seemingly quite happy and content, talking of matters of which he knew nothing.

"We're ready to go driving, Mother, please hurry," she said once in an urgent, excited whisper.

Presently David had to admit to himself that her mind was failing, but the horror of the thought

was leavened by the gaiety of her demeanor. When he was not confronted by the spectacle of a trembling old woman he could imagine that a young girl was chattering out there in the sunshine. Every morning Mrs. Wells arrayed herself most carefully in the black silk dress, the lace collar, and the cameo pin, and from somewhere she brought forth a small black lace fan spangled with gilt sequins that constantly kept her hands busy.

She had grown so helpless that David wanted to stay with her all day. But once, when he lingered, she seemed to recall her gaze from the distance and said reprovingly, "Business, David! You must go! You must be a gentleman some day."

Poor dear old Pip was aging too. He spent his days in the corner near the fireplace, regarding its empty cave disapprovingly through bleared eyes. Age and weariness and hopelessness surrounded David.

So the spring deepened, and life ran on and nothing mattered.

Then, one evening, David returned from the City and found his mother, as usual, sitting out on the veranda but as he approached her she seemed to have fallen together in the chair. An icy hand clutched at his heart.

“Mother!” he cried, but she did not answer. “Mother!” he repeated stepping closer, but there was still no answer.

Presently he realized that she was dead and he fell at her feet weeping . . . old Pip waddled out after a time and with his faithful tongue licked the back of his prostrate master’s neck. But even this did not comfort him.

David, bewildered, not knowing what to do, what arrangements to make, appealed to Mr. Stanton. That gentleman calmly took charge of affairs, notifying a number of Mrs. Wells’ other relatives. Accordingly the day of the funeral found the little red house beneath the cliff crowded with such a company as it was never meant to hold. Besides Mr. Stanton, there was David’s uncle, the lawyer, a stern, thin man with a heavy nose and overhanging eyebrows; two thin sisters in black silk, very elegant and soft-voiced, who murmured in turn, repeatedly, “Poor Jane! What a hideous mistake she made!” There was also a stout old gentleman with gold-rimmed spectacles which he constantly polished with a white silk handkerchief, and there were others of like pattern.

David felt a sudden and violent hatred for all these people. The feeling came to him that none of them cared for his mother; they had simply

come now that she was dead to pry into the little house whose door she had held shut against them for so long, hiding from them her regrets and her longings. He caught the two thin sisters gazing around curiously at the room while their long noses from behind the handkerchiefs they held before them, sniffed twitchingly into corners. He slipped out and went up to his own room, closed the door noiselessly, and sat by the window. His eyes were dry and burning. He only came downstairs at last when Mr. Stanton called to him that the carriage which was to follow the hearse was waiting for him.

Then afterwards he came back to the house alone.

He was glad the mourners had gone, glad to be alone, but he did not know what to do with himself. Unrest seized him. He walked around the house, from one room to the other. A strange feeling came to possess him that he continually met his father and mother, and stranger still, he also met himself at various ages. He thought of his mother. It seemed to him that he had loved her more than he had ever suspected. He missed her horribly.

Finally he dug Pip out of his corner and held him on his lap while he sat looking out the window at the dark waters glimmering under the stars and

he wondered about life and death and the eternal mystery of things.

The summer stole by drearily dragging October behind it. It was almost a year since Nora's elopement.

Mr. Stanton summoned David into his private office one day.

"Be seated, David," he said.

David sat down, wondering what was to come and yet not deeply curious.

"I have been watching you carefully, my boy," said Mr. Stanton. "You have been here three years and you do not show the—hem!—development we expect from our young men."

"My work has not been interesting," said David. "If you could give me work in which I could use my imagination—"

"We do not need imagination here," said Mr. Stanton, meticulously emphasizing the right words. "We need *application—work—lots of hard, painstaking effort*—that is what we demand."

David was silent.

"I do not think you are exactly adapted to the insurance business," continued Mr. Stanton, balancing the tips of the fingers of one hand nicely against the tips of the other. "You're not practical. But I want to give you every possible

chance. Suppose you go out and take a walk and think things over. Come back and see me in an hour.”

David was glad to get the unaccustomed outing. He walked down Broadway to the Battery and stood by one of the stone posts of the sea wall with his hat off. He tried to think of business and of what he should say to Mr. Stanton on his return, but he could not keep his mind on it; he could only think of the Statue of Liberty uplifting her torch out there in the harbor, and he tried to imagine the feelings of the immigrants when they first see it—how it must thrill them so that they raised their heavy faces toward it with prayers on their lips—how it must raise hopes that too often were to be thrust underfoot in the New Land of Promise where luxury is only for the efficient and the well-trained and the grasping, and where no one is satisfied with anything but luxury.

He became lost in this maze of thought and did not notice that he was overstaying the time Mr. Stanton appointed. He did not get back to the office until two hours after he left it instead of the one which had been granted him. Mr. Stanton was awaiting him with an open watch on his desk.

“You are late,” he began sternly. “It is characteristic of you. I am disappointed, David.”

As David said nothing but merely waited, he asked sharply: "Well, have you decided?"

"I'll try to do better—to work harder," said David, "but I can't promise."

"You can't promise?"

"If you give me work that will interest me—that I can lose myself in—that will grip me—oh, then I'll promise to make good!" cried David eagerly.

Mr. Stanton snapped his watch shut. "We can't give you such work. You are only wasting your time here. You will get two weeks' salary as you leave to-night."

"I'm—discharged?" gasped David.

Mr. Stanton turned to his desk and took up some papers with: "If you wish to put it that way. You may refer to us for—for a reference as to your personal character and—and family connections."

David continued to gaze at him for a minute. Then he swung around and walked out.

So his three years in business, the career on which he had embarked with such high and ardent hopes, with flags waving and trumpets blowing, ended in utter shipwreck. The worst of it was he realized it was his own fault . . . he had never cared . . . never tried.

That night he arrived home at the little red

house and prepared his supper as usual. But after it was all ready and on the table he found he could eat nothing. So he cut up some meat on a plate, mixed it with bread, and gave it to Pip.

It suddenly occurred to him that he had no place to go to-morrow, nothing to do. A great feeling of loneliness, an engulfing sense of being utterly alone, fell upon him. He took his hat from the rack and went to the door. Pip jumped up to accompany him, but David shook his head.

“Not to-night, Pip,” he said gently. “It’s all alone, to-night.”

When he was out on the beach a thousand thoughts assailed him like embittered furies. It was not so much that he had lost his position, but it was the last of a number of events that had followed fast one upon the other to break his spirit. He thought of the afternoon when he and Nora were out in the rowboat and Nora had told him he would have to suffer before he really lived; that his spirit would almost have to be broken with suffering before he saw things as they are. . . . Well, it was broken now—it was utterly broken.

First there had come Nora’s elopement, her downfall, as he could not help but put it, and this had been the cause of the cruelest suffering, and then his mother’s death, and now, last of all, but

somehow more than he could bear, his failure in business. And his Great Dream—his Dream to be of help to his fellow men—what of that? It had colored and filled the years of his life almost since he could remember—it had colored and filled them as sunshine fills a spring morning. And now it was vanished. It was as if it had never been. It left life shadowy and dark and full of foreboding, as sunlight leaves a swamp on a moonless night. He was lost in a swamp of darkness—he knew no directions—he had no aim—he saw no light anywhere—he wished the swamp's slime would rise up and cover him and draw him down into its awful depths.

After a while the thousand thoughts ran together and clotted, forming a shapeless, heavy mass that weighed upon his brain and pressed upon his heart. He continued to walk along the beach but he did not know where he walked. Occasionally he stumbled over rocks and pieces of driftwood. The lights of Staten Island blinked and danced and shivered, and they were like eyes that watched him relentlessly, curiously, as if they expected he was going to do something. The October air crept around him, the sea murmured, and it seemed to him that each had a dark and unutterable message for him.

Finally, almost without intention on his part or

even consciousness of where he was going, he found his feet in water and continued to wade out into the water. It was very shallow—the tide must be out—it took a long time to reach the deep waters where oblivion lay—where the solution lay—where problems were solved and broken spirits mended.

The water was up to his knees. It was icy. It numbed him. Suddenly he stopped. He thought of Pip—of the faithful little animal grown old and feeble and helpless. There was no one to feed him; he was locked in the house, and he would starve—he would simply starve. David saw him watching for his return—his brown eyes fixed on the door. So he would die. Pip would never give up hope—he would always believe in him, always depend on him, always trust in him until the end came.

And could he, David, fail him?

Then David, standing there with the cold water clutching at him, lapping at his knees, felt his brain clear. The cold touch of the water revived him. What was he about? This was a coward's way. He had always been a dreamer, he had failed because he was a dreamer, but he had never been a coward. He threw back his head and faced the shore.

"Hell!" he cried aloud. "Oh, hell, it can't end

this way!" and he made for the shore with long, resolute strides.

But it was another David that came out of the water; the Dreamer was gone—and the Dream was ended.

PART II

CHAPTER I

DAVID came forth from the water that night with his dreams and fancies gone. The waters had not covered him but they had swept away the illusions which he had cherished so long as if they were loose garments which the current had seized and carried off.

And something fine had perished there in the waters off the Bay Ridge shore, something fine which nearly all youth possesses and which the State, if it had been a wise State, would have taken and trained and made of service to itself.

For David came out of the water intent only on himself and his own success. There was left no thought for others' happiness. He was determined to get ahead, to get money and power for his own aggrandizement. The passing days hardened his resolutions. For the first time his ambitions became those which every young man of that period was supposed to be consumed with. "Get rich!" said the world. "Get rich honestly if you can, but anyway, get rich!" David determined to obey the command. He must be a success finan-

cially. Underneath this determination was another: he wanted passionately to show them (and by "them" he meant Henry Stanton and all his kind) that he had in him the stuff which makes success; the shrewdness and skill and energy which bring a poor young man out of the gloom of obscurity into the light of prosperity.

Gone was his desire, that dear desire, to help his fellow men; gone all those roseate, altruistic ideals of his youth in which he had visioned himself a savior, a prophet, and a leader who with magic words drew humanity on towards the heights. Now he was determined to climb, but to climb alone, to leave the sweltering mob far behind and to ally himself with those who sit in ease far above the wants of the common lot. And somewhere mixed up in these new ambitions, part of them, was the belief that they would bring him to Nora.

But between David and success lay ten years.

Ten long and bitter years they were! Many times, the only thing that stood between him and starvation was the five hundred dollars a year, which his mother had left him, so invested that he could obtain only the interest and not the capital. This ten dollars a week at least guaranteed him the dubious comfort of a cheap boarding house in Brooklyn; at least it saved him from joining the

ranks of those shadows who darken the doorways of gin mills, and the passageways of lodging houses along the meanest streets of the city . . .

After he left Bay Ridge he had first lived in a boarding house in Pacific Street, not far from the ugly red and yellow brick of the Long Island Railroad station—a district thick with boarding houses of a cheap and respectable sort, hiding their worn carpets, their white metal beds, their frayed and spotted linen, behind the neat brownstone fronts of the private houses of a past generation. Where doorways and steps had once glittered immaculate they now showed stains and the marks of perpetual passings; where windows had shone spotless, curtains now hung awry, shades were drawn at crazy angles.

When the interminable stews of that first boarding house turned his stomach sick with loathing, David moved to another house down the street. From there to another in the same neighborhood—to many others.

As he drifted from one living place to another, so, unskilled, untrained, inefficient, he drifted from one job to another. His solitary equipment was his imagination and for that he could find no market. He sank to the depths of doing odd jobs around a saloon in Livingston Street, a down-at-the-heels, ill-smelling joint, evil with age, with a

back room to which women brought their men to bargain with them over wet, shiny tables; he rose to the heights of reporting for the "Brooklyn Eagle"—and showed not a little skill in writing news but a woeful lack of energy in gathering it. He was a clerk in a hardware shop; one of the thousand employees of a huge department store; during one summer when the street car company took on extra men he was a conductor on the Coney Island line.

And yet, do you know, through all those lean years he never lost faith in his destiny. His belief in his ultimate success stayed unshaken. It was that belief which urged him to abandon one job after another, which kept him searching. After he had been at work in a place for three months or four he would say to himself, "This is not it! This is not what I want," and again he would go drifting. Lean years, bitter years, and yet, strangely, not altogether unhappy years! Confident of the future, he saw her beckoning with rosy finger. Meanwhile there was life itself unrolling before him, the rich and variegated life of a big city, a panorama which passed before him full of all sorts of interesting and wonderful pictures. There were the streets with their hurrying throngs, there were the shop windows with their displays of merchandise from all the world—rugs

and pictures, cigars and cigarettes, candies, groceries, fruits, sporting goods, canes and umbrellas—even women's clothes—he found interest in all of them. When he sauntered out of his lonely boarding house of an evening and wandered down Fulton Street, a change in the display of the windows of one of the big department stores was an event. Then there was the reading-room of the library in Third Avenue, very pleasant indeed of a rainy night, with illustrated magazines and periodicals to look over; and there was Prospect Park with its winding walks and the old cemetery lying hidden on the slope of a hill and, best of all, there was Brooklyn Bridge, with the black water glimmering below with the gold of reflected lights and the stupendous mass of the city, shimmering evanescent, wonderful, before him.

And every once in a while the panorama of life reached out and drew him into its folds so that he danced along with it, no longer merely a bystander who watched it roll by.

For he came to know, fleetingly, many men and women—clerks, employees of the street car company, barkeepers, reporters, old people in the boarding houses living frugally on their savings, waiting, it seemed, for dissolution. And David studied them all, wondered about them all, asked himself, "What are they getting out of life? Am

not I going to get more out of it than they are?"

There was something about David that drew people to him, made them confide in him, made them desire to be friends with him—both men and women he attracted, but especially women. Perhaps it was his voice which was deep and tender, a little slow, a little lazy, as if it had taken some quality from the murmur of the waters on the Bay Ridge shore; perhaps it was the way in which his head was set solidly upon his shoulders, the broad, well-modeled expanse of these shoulders and the depth and curve of his chest; perhaps it was the perpetual and rather wistful questioning which lingered in the depths of his eyes—a questioning which many women tried—and failed—to answer. For David still carried in his eyes the pain of the blows which had been dealt him in his youth, the blows which had shattered his idealism and which had led him once to seek oblivion in black waters. And this appeal in his eyes, combined with the splendid and vigorous body which he had inherited from his father, aroused women's curiosity, magnetized their interest, and made them wish to offer comfort and solace.

But always (during these years) there was but one woman for David, whether he saw her as a child in a sailor hat waving good-by to him from the top of a cliff or whether he saw her as a hunted

creature telling him of her desperation, while outside the little red house the November winds howled their derision.

A curious change came over David's attitude towards Nora Davenport's elopement as the years sped by. At first he could not help but think she had done a monstrously wicked thing; she had "fallen"; she was a bad woman by every doctrine of right or wrong. But, as the sand slipped through the glass, as he saw intimately on his journeying into the lives of many men and women, as he experienced himself the emotions which swayed them, and the conditions with which they must do battle, he realized that life is not a thing of black and white, of sunshine and shadow, wrong could be right and right, wrong, in such varying degrees that it was confusing, dizzying, impossible to arrange and classify, to fix the line of demarcation. Eventually Nora became to him a heroine of romance, a glamorous being. But whether he thought of her in earlier years as a condemned woman or, later, as a glorified one, he never thought of her without a quickening of the breath and a melting of the heart.

His devotion to Nora, however, did not rob him of all sense of other women. Life drove on and youth held the whip. While his relations with most of the women he came to know were simple

and friendly and innocent enough, there were exceptions.

It was through one of the exceptions that his success was brought about.

CHAPTER II

IT was during one of his many periods of unemployment that David fell in with Nell Ferguson. He had just moved to a new boarding house in State Street and during the long spring evenings when he sat outside on the stone steps alone, below the chattering group above him, she took compassion upon him and gathering her skirts about her moved her round straw "seat" down next to his and sat beside him.

"I hope I 'm not intruding on your thoughts," she said, as introduction. "It 's sort of lonesome when you come to a new boarding house and don't know a soul, ain't it? I know because I been up against it myself."

She was older than he and so, she thought, it was not too unladylike to make the advances. He looked like such a nice boy and so lonely. The other boarders, of course, would tease her about it. But pity and the maternal instinct urged her on.

Nell Ferguson had red hair that only needed a little more attention, a more knowing arrangement, to make it very beautiful; like a copper vase

that needs burnishing to bring out its color. Her eyes were green, distinctly green, set in a face so pale that it was like a white mask. Her lips were thin and moistly red and her figure was of the slimness that has seen its blossoming and fallen back into virginal lines—the “old maid,” they called her in the boarding house, although she was but a few years past thirty. She overflowed with nervous energy; when she walked her feet went pat, pat, pat, very rapidly and jerkily; her body slanted a little to one side as if she were sailing before a wind and when she talked her hands accompanied her words in quick little gestures. This animation gave her a certain charm . . . and her laugh was like the peal of tiny bells beneath glass.

As Nell Ferguson and David, after that overture on the steps, advanced into friendship, as they walked down the street together to get an ice cream soda at the corner drug shop and, later, when they took trolley rides down to Coney Island, spring, a sweet mild, tumultuous spring, assailed them. Even State Street washed clean by spring rains shone whitely with spring sunshine and the solitary tree the block boasted carried all the season's significance in its pale green branches. It seemed quite natural that Nell should slip her arm through David's, that beneath the soft cloak of ad-

vancing night their hands should meet, their fingers intertwine. It meant nothing, Nell Ferguson assured herself. She was so much older than the boy and she knew her world, her world of offices and boarding houses with a knowledge so keen that it was cruel.

As for David, he was not nearly as sophisticated as Nell. He liked Nell immensely, but love her?—not a bit of it. He analyzed his emotions sufficiently to come to that decision. Occasionally in sentimental moments, when he pressed her arm or held her hand, he tried to pretend it was another's arm, another's hand, but he had knowledge enough not to let Nell know this. And he had kindness enough. He was twenty five now and he had had his experiences, but he felt that Nell was a "good" girl and not for anything would he have violated that goodness.

And the spring, intent on its own work, laughed! Busy with its brush and broom, its spade and its watering pot, the spring laughed! More sensuous than the soft music of stringed instruments, more alluring than the light of shaded candles, more intoxicating than the stealth of pale gold wine, more potent than all these cheap and artificial things, the spring mocked them.

One night in late June, almost three months after their first meeting, they returned from a trip to

Coney Island. Down there, the sea lying like a mirror beneath the stars had held them late. It was past midnight when they reached the boarding house. On the steps they lingered.

"Don't go in yet, Nell," David pleaded. "It 's too beautiful. We can see almost as many stars here as down by the ocean. Let 's sit here a little while."

"No. I 'd better go in," Nell said, and her voice was so strained that David turned in surprise to look at her.

"You feel all right?"

"Yes—yes!"

"Then don't go in just yet."

She sat down reluctantly a little distance from him, tense and still, all her habitual little nervous movements stilled. When his hand, following its custom, sought hers, touched hers there in the shadow, he found it frozen. "Poor cold little hand!" he murmured, and placing it between his own tried to warm it. He drew her to him. And—in a minute—she was in his arms. She kissed him with her moist quivering lips. "Oh, David, forgive me!" she sobbed. "It was n't my fault. I was fighting against it. You would n't help me. You would n't let me go."

But the flame of his emotions had leaped to meet hers. No, he would n't let her go now. He felt

curiously as he had felt once when he had stayed under water too long; there was the same pounding in his ears; the same surcharged pressure of the blood as if it would burst the skin. No compunctions had he now.

The step of a passerby sounded.

"Let 's go into my room," Nell whispered, her face damp with tears, close against his . . .

Naturally it was not long before Nell Ferguson knew the events of David's life as a rugmaker knows the pattern he is weaving—all except the part Nora Davenport had played in it. She knew his ambitions, too, and how he had come by those ambitions, and while she had not understood him entirely when he had told her of his earlier dreams and preoccupations she could sympathize with his present purposes. Furthermore she had faith in him even though for three months now he had been unable to find work.

At night when they sat on the steps together or walked through the summer streets after the heat of day had passed, she did what she could to encourage him, strengthen his belief in himself. "It 's only the chance you want, David," she recited. "There was Willie Marshall, a feller I knew. He never could seem to get ahead, went from one job to another like you. Then, one day,

his uncle died and left him a little, run-down grocery store on Atlantic Avenue. Well, it seemed Willie had a knack for running a grocery store but no one had ever guessed it . . . now he 's got eighteen stores all over the city. It 's like that. You got to find your chance. But you got to keep looking, David."

One July evening she followed him up to his room from the dinner table. She was, he could see, greatly excited. Her green eyes were shining like grass with the sun on it and in each pale cheek glowed a spot of color. "Say, David, there 's a job open in our office. Not much of a job—eight dollars a week as bill-clerk. But it 's something to start on. And B. Foster and Company is a good concern to work for—treat you fine. I been raised every year since I been there. Maybe you could work your way up—maybe it 's just the opening you want."

"Eight dollars sounds like a lot to me now, Nell. I 'll go over first thing in the morning."

"Let 's see how you look." She took his arm and without ceremony pulled him over to the wall where a thin gas jet sputtering beside a yellow pine bureau added its warmth to the heat of the room. David's forehead was beaded with sweat and he knew well enough that his gray suit worn thin and shapeless at certain vulnerable spots was

not fit for the close inspection. Nell pursed her lips reflectively and shook her head. "That suit 's pretty well done for and your cuffs are frayed."

"I 've got a better shirt," he protested, flushing at the frankness of her criticism, for he was always sensitive about his appearance.

"Ain't got any money hidden away, have you?"

David drew forth a crumpled dollar bill and a few pieces of silver from his pocket. "That 's all—till I get my ten next week."

"Well, I 'll tell you what I 'll do. I 'll give you the money and you go down to Abraham and Strauss' to-morrow morning as soon as it opens. They 're having a sale of men's twenty-five dollar suits for sixteen fifty. You get one, a nice plain blue one; blue looks so cool for summer, and for Heaven's sake see that it fits better 'n the one you got on. Then as soon as you get fixed up in it you come right over and apply for that job. You got a good chance 'cause they ain't advertised it yet."

"I can't take your money, Nell."

"You can't?" she demanded hotly. "And why not? Sure you can. You can pay me back, can't you?"

"Yes, I could pay you back in a month if I get the job, but suppose I don't get it?"

"You got to get it, that 's all. They 'll give it

to you if you show 'em you want it bad enough."

Finally she not only gave him the money for the suit but for a blue necktie with white spots and for a straw hat as well . . .

David got the job and with his first week's salary bought Nell a box of chocolates and two dollars' worth of American Beauties.

"If you 're going to spend your money as foolish as that," she admonished him, "you 'll never get ahead—never!"

But she took the roses to her room, wept over them a little, and secretly was a thousand times more pleased than if he had paid her back immediately the entire sum he had borrowed from her.

CHAPTER III

IN Greenwich Street, in the center of an area of tangled, truck-crowded streets, where the food the city consumes stands in crates and boxes beneath sheds that roof the sidewalks into long, littered passageways through which the pedestrian with difficulty picks his way, where the clanging street cars add to the confusion and the trains of the Ninth Avenue Elevated lend their shrieks and groans to the turmoil of the streets below; in the midst of this chaos and confusion was located the old building which the firm of B. Foster and Company had occupied for thirty years.

It was, as such things go, an ancient concern, burdened with traditions, with methods of doing business that were fast becoming obsolete. The business, as you could readily tell if you stood before the wide-doored main entrance and savored the pungent odor of roasting coffee, was chiefly dealing in these small brown berries. But teas and various spices also played their part. The firm bought these commodities from the importers and, with a comfortable margin added, sold them

to grocers, general stores, and hotels throughout the Eastern States. It was not until several years later, after David had developed the idea of packing tea and coffee in bright red shiny packages, that their business became national in scope. And by that time, of course, they had built that large structure, towering over the other huddled buildings of the district, which they now occupy, and they were importing their own teas and coffees from the far ends of the earth.

The place that David found that first day was small and humble enough, not nearly large enough nor important enough to house his great ambitions. The main floor of the building, piled high in the rear with sacks of coffee, was given to shipping purposes; on the floor above it were the offices and the three or four additional floors were all devoted to "stock"—more coffee in its rotund, burlap bags, chests of tea with strange markings and pictures pasted on their straw faces, tins and bags and barrels of cloves, mustard, pepper, and other spices.

David's first two years with B. Foster and Company were uneventful enough. He slaved away at his desk from morning till night, making out bills from the order slips which came to him from the shipping clerk in batches of twenty and thirty at a time. He was rapid and accurate at the simple

arithmetic the work demanded and he satisfied his employers without in any way attracting their special attention. At the end of the first year he found an extra two dollars in his weekly pay envelope.

It was only because of Nell that he clung to the job. By turning his head he could see her, one of a dozen girls, bending over their typewriters, and the patience of those stooping shoulders, that glossy red hair fixed so steadfastly over the clicking keys, somehow gave him a renewed sense of duty. He hated the work. It was so deadly monotonous. He hated it with the intensity of hate he had given his task of filing cards, long ago in the office of the insurance company. Almost ten years, he thought sometimes, and still at this horrible, meaningless drudgery which made life a mockery, and often he found himself asking that old question which had now become like the cry of a tortured soul, "Is this all—is this all that I am going to get out of life?" And he felt that he must rebel, that he could not let this be all. But Nell held him.

When they walked home together at night towards Brooklyn Bridge, he said to Nell more than once, "I can't stand it much longer. Soon I shan't be fit for anything else."

And she took his arm, let him feel the warm

pressure of her fingers, with, "I heard some of them saying there 'll be great changes there when old man Foster dies. Maybe there 'll be something for you then, David."

Meanwhile the chance which was to make David a success was close upon him.

At Nell's suggestion he had taken up the study of stenography and typewriting at a night school. He never was diligent enough to master the former but he did get so that he could typewrite fairly well, and one day he asked John Powell, the junior partner, if he could have a machine on which to write his bills.

John Powell, who in the slang of the day was known as the "live wire" of the concern, readily gave his consent. David found, after a little practice, that he could do his work so much more rapidly on a typewriter that half his day was left idle. Time moved more sluggishly than ever.

But one afternoon the junior partner, noticing David sitting idle, handed him a batch of letters.

"See if you can answer these," he said. "You ought to know enough about the business by now to be able to do it without having to be told what to say."

David seized upon this new work eagerly. The letters he had to answer were from storekeepers in Troy, in Rome, in Columbus, from many small

towns and villages. They were quite ordinary letters, asking for information about prices, shipments, errors in weight, but as David read them over he had a vision of alert, eager little men, pencils behind ears, with bald foreheads, coatless, looking at him appealingly. These small matters were momentous to them. As if each letter were a personal appeal he set to work to satisfy it.

The closing bell rang and, for the first time, David did not hear it. Outside the wrought-iron railing Nell stood trying to attract his attention, asking by her attitude whether she should wait for him or go home alone. Mr. Powell approached and stood gazing over his shoulder, watching him with an amused twinkle in his eyes—and David noticed none of these things.

For at last he had been given work which however humbly, claimed his imagination, and at last he had found himself . . .

That night David could eat no dinner. The pot roast and boiled potatoes grew cold on the plate before him.

"I 've got it, Nell," he kept saying to her over and over, after he had induced her to go walking with him; "I 've got what I can do."

Nell smiled sympathetically and said nothing—but her eyes did not smile.

The next morning after Mr. Powell had read the letters which had been laid in a neat pile on his desk, he summoned David to his private office and pushed a chair towards him with: "Close the door and sit down; I want to talk with you.

"I'm afraid you've been hiding your light under a bushel, Wells," he began. "These letters are—well, they're remarkable. They won't do at all, need toning down, but there's something about them, something friendly, intimate,"—over his glasses he regarded David with interest—"I'm going to put you in training, my boy. I'm going to make you chief correspondent. We need young blood in this concern. We're getting ossified. Nobody sees it but me. I've had to fight for every innovation. There's a future here for you. But you must promise to stick to me—and by me."

David nodded, too amazed to speak.

This was the period during which the stiff and formal letters of business, the trite and awkward conventional phrases, were just beginning to be replaced by something else, something more human and natural. It was the period during which a few progressive business men had discovered that you could write to a man as you talked to him, that letter writing could be made an art, that an imaginative appeal could be made to a buyer that

would open his purse strings as the magic word "Sesame" opened the door of the cave.

And David, under the direction of John Powell, did make his writing of letters an art. His success was astonishing. His letters created customers where personal visits from the firm's salesmen had failed.

"The trouble with most business men is that they lack imagination," said Mr. Powell to David—and he seemed to be voicing David's own thoughts.—"Business has been conducted with incredible stupidity. Perhaps not all businesses—finance, railroading—there, of course, they simply had to have imagination. And in the professions—there they have specialists, men trained to think in certain ways. But in an ordinary next-to-the-ground business like ours there has just been blundering, stumbling along, no knowledge of the field at large, no knowledge of the forces that make a man buy, make a hundred men buy, a million men . . . make 'em buy again and again. If only I had a free hand—" his eyes became dreamy, distant, while David sat by worshiping this miraculous man who had so accidentally discovered him and who so well appreciated imagination. "Well, some day I shall have a free hand," said Powell, bringing his gaze back to earth and to David. "I can manage young Foster all right.

It's the old man who stands in the way. You must stick to me, David. How much are you getting now? I'll see if I can get a raise for you next month. I have the ideas, but I can't express them, can't get them on paper as you can. I can see this business growing, growing . . . after old Foster gets out of the way. Think of it! Reaching all over the globe, into every nook, every corner, to bring in the things the American public wants, can be made to think they want. We'll sell 'em at a fancy price, too, David. Goes better. We'll go up together, you and I. And it isn't the money so much—it's the fun of it—the game."

Thus Mr. Powell spoke to David often and David grew to look upon him as the most remarkable man he had ever known. Between them sprang up a friendship apart from their business associations. John Powell at that time was a man of forty five, a smallish man with a round body and a big round head. But his legs were short and thin. They scarcely seemed capable of supporting that big body especially that large head with its prominent Roman nose and heavy jaw. When he stood up David sometimes thought of him as Punch tottering on his frail limbs. He was a bachelor and lived in an apartment of his own uptown with a Japanese valet to look after him.

"Can't stand women around me," he told David

once, when he had carried him off to dinner with him. "Always fussing, meddling, tidying things up. I've got use for only one kind of woman—and that is n't the good kind. Good women demand too much, tie a man down, stop his work, get a strangle-hold."

He also told David that night of how he had come to New York, a poor boy from the country. "The same old story," he said with a grim laugh. "The same old privations at first . . . but we're getting somewhere now. I've got a foot on the ladder and it'll take all hell to shake me loose."

So David with John Powell's help also got his foot on the ladder, and with his skill in writing letters started to climb. But meanwhile on the other side of his life, the personal side, forces were at work upon him, influencing him, shaping him, changing him . . .

CHAPTER IV

“SOME day, dear, you ’ll want to be free of me,” Nell said more than once, “and when that time comes just tell me. I don’t want to stand in your way. I don’t want to hold you a day longer than—than you want me to.”

David always tried to reassure her when she took this tone. But secretly he often found himself wishing that the affair were over—that it had never been begun. He had never cared enough to justify it. He had just been swept into it as a straw carried by a current of water is swept into a muddy pool in which it lies helpless, slowly revolving. He could not see his relations with Nell clearly; his feelings in regard to them went through so many phases. Sometimes he was ashamed of them, imagined what people would say if they knew—especially such people as John Powell and the Fosters, father and son, who held his destiny in their hands. Sometimes he justified himself by saying that he was simply following nature’s dictates—he was neither better nor worse than other men. Sometimes he became ter-

ribly sick of the whole thing, rebelled against the obligations it imposed upon him. Often he blamed himself severely, held himself to account but just as often he felt that it had been forced upon him, that he was, in a measure, guiltless. But always he told himself that he must do the square thing by Nell.

Meanwhile he found—and it disturbed him greatly—that Nell could not keep up with the new interests his increasing income opened up to him. He developed a taste for modern literature; the best of it, and bought and read avidly the books of Wells, Galsworthy, translations from the Russian novelists. And it hurt him that Nell could not share his passion for these books, that when he loaned them to her, after one or two attempts, she left them lying unread on her table. And he had many other new interests which remained as closed as the books to her. In the old days he had been glad enough to go on trolley rides with Nell, little excursions on which they had each paid their own share of the expenses, to go on walks ending up with a “treat” at an ice cream parlor or, more rarely, a beer-garden. But now that he had more money, these simple pleasures did not satisfy him—he wanted to go to theaters, expensive restaurants, roof-gardens.

He tried to get Nell to go with him, and while

he often succeeded he never succeeded without protests from her.

“Ain’t you spending too much, David?” she sometimes asked, awed by the prices on the menu which the waiter placed in her hands. “Why can’t we have dinner at the house—we pay for it anyway—and then go to the theater afterwards?”

But David thought of John Powell’s glowing promises and smiled at her fears. He went so far as to try to induce Nell to accept some clothes and jewelry from him, even some money, but she shut her lips and shook her head until her red hair fell in little loose coils around her pale cheeks.

David indulged in other extravagances that made her gaze at him sadly. Once when he came down dressed in dinner clothes (they were going to the theater) she said, “You’re getting too grand for me, David,” and in a half-whisper, “if I don’t look good enough for you—”

But David denied the imputation indignantly and he was sincere in his indignation. Nevertheless he wished that Nell would let him buy her some fashionable clothes, such as the other women wore in the places he now frequented. He understood Nell’s scruples but he wished he could overcome them.

He had bought the evening clothes ready made, for a dinner party to which John Powell had in-

vited him—a dinner party which was held in the main dining-room of one of the big uptown hotels, the brilliance and gorgeousness of which took David's breath away. And the party itself was a revelation—this was an experience totally new to him. The champagne flowed so plentifully it set a new standard of extravagance for him; the women with their dazzling teeth and jewels, their sleek, lustrous hair and bare shoulders, embarrassed him. "And I'm nothing but a clerk living in a cheap boarding house in Brooklyn," he thought. Very small he felt—very insignificant. But his new evening clothes were reassuring, and John Powell said, his hand on David's shoulder, "This is a young man who's going to make his mark in the world." Under that spur, David took himself in hand and found somewhat to his surprise, that he could converse quite intelligently with the most brilliant of the women, could return sally for sally.

"You'll do, my boy," said John Powell in his apartment later—he had invited David to stay all night with him. "It took me some time to get on to the ropes when I first got enough money to go in for this sort of thing. All you need in New York is bluff. Just pretend that you've been used to all this show and glitter all your life. Don't be surprised at anything. If they serve you

soup in gold plates take it as a matter of course."

That was the first of many such parties to which John Powell invited David. And after each one David went back to the State Street boarding house with a greater loathing of its stale smells and worn furniture and monotonous greasy fare. John Powell kept urging him to come over and live with him. "You can pay your share of the expenses—whatever you can afford—if it's the thought of coming free that's keeping you back," he said.

But as Nell had held him to his position with B. Foster and Company, in the early days, so now she held him to the boarding house in Brooklyn.

So their affair dragged on . . .

Then one night very late, David stole out of Nell's room, carrying his shoes in one hand and there before him stood the landlady.

"An' so Mrs. Jenkins was right," she said with tight lips, "an' I kep' telling her she was a grumpy old busybody. Well, who 'd 'a' thought it."

The next morning Nell and he were told they must leave the boarding house immediately. "I never had such goings-on in my house before," said the landlady and her eyes glittered like hard black coals in her worried, toilworn face. "I've always tried to run a respectable house an' now

look at the name you give me. The other boarders would all give notice if you don't git out an' I don't know as I 'd blame them."

David had spent a sleepless night. Disgrace in the eyes of these people came hard; doubly hard because he despised them all. And now what was he to do in regard to Nell? Try as he would to find a solution, an escape, there was only one—only one, if he were to abide by his vow "to do the square thing" by her. For Nell was disgraced, too. And for a woman the disgrace was harder to bear—inexpressibly harder to bear. But how unutterably hard it was to see his visions of a rich and variegated life in New York vanishing, of the fine flow of his new interests checked—even his success imperiled.

Nevertheless, stifling a tumult of protests, of sick dreads, that lay like a swamp beneath what he considered his duty, he asked Nell to marry him. This was in the parlor, a horrible room of red plush furniture and frowning crayon portraits to which he and Nell had retired for a consultation while the outraged landlady, arms folded, hovered in the hallway outside like a bird whose nest is being violated.

At his stammering words Nell put her hands one on each of his shoulders and looked into his eyes long and searchingly. Then slowly she shook her

head and her lower lip quivered like a child's. "No, my dear, I ain't the wife for you. I've seen this coming a long while—ever since the day you wrote those first letters and Mr. Powell made such a fuss over you. You're going up, David, up and up, and I got to stick to my own level. I tried so hard to understand those books you were so crazy about—and I could n't see anything in them. And it'd be like that in everything. I'd just hold yer down and all your swell new friends that you talk so much about would laugh at me and be sorry for you. And David—" she turned her head away for she did not want him to see the tears in her eyes—"I know you don't really want to marry me—not *really*. You're just asking me because you think it's the right thing to do. And it's awful nice of you—it's just what I expected of you but—I love you too well, dear, to be fooled."

Her generosity stung David into new avowals, but Nell's determination was not to be shaken.

"I might as well take my medicine now, David," she said, "better now than later on when I'd see hate in every look you gave me. I can stand this but I—I could n't stand that, David."

When he had quieted down, she said, "Now I've got to look for another boarding house."

"I can't stand another cheap boarding house,

Nell. Let me fix up a nice little apartment for you. I'll go to live with Mr. Powell."

She moved over to the window and drawing aside the patched lace curtains, stiff and blue from many washings, stood gazing out into the street along which little blotches of soiled snow lay melting in the warm sun. Presently without turning, she said, "I've never taken any of your money, David. Everything I've given you I've given because I loved you. Somehow, that's kept me from being ashamed. I'm not sorry for any of it. Don't ever feel that you are to blame. If you ever think of me—and you will sometimes, won't you?—just think that you've given me more happiness than I ever expected to have. And now, good-by, dear. You go first. If we go together all the old women upstairs will hang out their windows and gossip all the more. Besides I want to talk with Mrs. Tupper. She's been nice to me at times and I don't want to leave her thinking I'm altogether bad."

David packed his belongings into a taxicab and drove to Mr. Powell's apartment on Lexington Avenue, feeling that he had behaved like a cad and yet puzzled as to how he might otherwise have acted. Yet, despite himself, he experienced an overwhelming sense of relief in his liberation. New York instead of Brooklyn, a luxurious bache-

lor apartment instead of the boarding house, John Powell and his radiantly prosperous friends instead of the clerks and stenographers, the gossiping old men and women—why it was like being born anew into a golden world. And he made numerous stern and rigid resolutions.

Then, of a sudden, he dived down beneath the taxicab seat and with great difficulty extricated one of his traveling bags. Opening it he took out a small leather case and from the case drew out a photograph. It was a faded photograph, taken by an amateur in the days when amateur photography was very bad indeed, but dim and frayed as it was it showed David very clearly, as if it were taken yesterday, a little girl with straight spindly legs and big serious eyes standing on a beach with a wide sailor hat in her hand. It was a long time since David had looked upon that photograph . . . a long time since he had felt he wanted to look upon it.

CHAPTER V

UNTIL David's marriage he lived with John Powell, for almost three years. And he found these years more abundant and full than he had ever imagined they could be. Eventful years, crowded with new sensations, new experiences. He learned very many things; learned the art of associating with beautifully gowned, charming women and with wealthy, self-confident men, business men mostly but occasionally others—painters, journalists, actors, dramatists. He learned how to enter a fashionable restaurant with nonchalance; how to order a dinner that gained the approval of the head-waiter; how to lounge elegantly and at ease wherever he went no matter how distinguished or rich his host or hostess. Fortunate years, too, in which money flowed into his pockets so readily that he never cared how easily it flowed out again.

So the fairy tale of the fisherman's son rounded itself to perfection; he was now a prince in the city and the keys of the city which opened all doors to him were in his hand. After a year or

two of this life it was, indeed, hard to recognize in David the shy and diffident youth who long ago on the Bay Ridge shore had dreamed away his early years visioning the things he would do to serve his fellowmen; who, later in Brooklyn, had fled from one boarding house to another in search of some alleviation from the sordidness to which ten dollars a week, and seldom more, condemned him.

As a balance to the luxury and idleness of his nights, there was the work of his days—hard, unremitting work which interested him immensely. John Powell in the office was an entirely different man from the John Powell who sat at the head of a dinner table and saw that his guests were diverted and entertained and filled to repletion with the finest wines and foods. He was no easy task-master. “When you work, work hard and when you play, play hard,” he told David, “but keep a sharp line between the two.” And David found it amusing to picture John Powell playing hard; with his immensely heavy body and his short thin legs, he looked as if he ’d topple over at the first swift step; but it was difficult to think of him as other than working hard.

The affairs of B. Foster and Company had fashioned themselves very felicitously for David’s, or rather, for John Powell’s purposes. While David was still living in Brooklyn, old William Foster

went out one mild wet day without his rubbers, caught cold, and died within a week. He was the head of the concern, its founder, and of late years the chief impediment to its progress. He would have none of these "dangerous, new-fangled ways of doing business," as he called them. His opposition to the telephone, to female stenographers and clerks, had become legends around the office, fables which the older employees recounted to the younger in moments of confidence. A generous and firm supporter of his church, a large contributor to those charities of which he approved, he would rather have died, said John Powell, than see his firm's name attached to a newspaper advertisement.

Old William Foster's death left the concern in the hands of his son, Avery Foster, and of John Powell who had for years been awaiting this opportunity. For Avery Foster was—to quote John Powell again—"a weak sister." He was a man of forty nine, hiding his thin, dull face behind an umbrageous black beard, and he thought a great deal more of his horses than he did of his business. He was glad enough to let the management slip into the capable hands of John Powell, especially when the wisdom of the course was so obviously shown in increased profits.

Almost immediately after old Foster's death,

B. Foster and Company began to advertise on so large a scale that it set their competitors wagging their heads and prophesying ruin within a twelve-month. "They needed old Foster, after all, to hold 'em down," ran the gossip. "It's John Powell doing this with his crazy ideas."

But when Avery Foster, white beneath his black beard, came to Powell with reports of this talk, the latter smiled grimly, set his teeth, and said never a word—except to David, later. "Damn old fossils," he said. "They certainly got Avery scared. But they can't even see a thing when we set them the example, show them the way. Well, when they go against the wall"—he shrugged his thick set shoulders, and puffed away at his cigar with keen enjoyment.

John Powell's justification came even before it could be expected. The business spread all over the country; a branch was opened in Chicago, another in San Francisco; instead of buying from importers as they had formerly done, their own buyers were established in China, in Japan, in South America—wherever one was needed, and they put up that large red brick Foster Building on the corner of Franklin and Hudson streets which still dominates that district of the City.

In all of this growth and progress David had a hand; Avery Foster's influence was almost negli-

gible; occasionally, true to his training, he uttered a protest, but while John Powell appeared to give these criticisms his attention, he never let them influence him. He forged ahead as if his plans were laid long ago while he still chafed under old William Foster's restraint and as if, now that the restraint was removed, he simply had to follow the lines marked out previously.

It was really in the privacy of his own sitting-room in his apartment, a big brown room glowing with an open fire and filled with deep soft leather chairs, that the destinies of the firm were molded. It was there that David and he consulted, sometimes early in the morning after they had returned from the theater or a party in one of the restaurants.

It was there, for instance, that they decided on the name of a new package coffee—a name which was to flame at some time or other from every billboard in the country, to flash from electric signs, to dance in street cars, to emblazon—in three colors—the back covers of magazines; to become eventually as familiar to the housewife as the name of her eldest born.

David had seen at his printer's a short time previously some examples of the highly decorative packages which the Germans were using for their food products and that night as they rode home

from the Astor, he told John Powell about them.

“We ought to put out an orange and black package with an attractive name,” he said—they had entered the apartment— “Something that when it stands on the grocer’s shelf can be seen a mile off. That’s the sort of advertising that’s been neglected. Possibly because it doesn’t cost anything and therefore its value is not forced upon us.”

John Powell lowered himself carefully into the depths of a big chair, shook off his pumps and, leaning over, prepared himself a highball from the whisky, ice, and seltzer which the Japanese servant by custom always left standing on the table in preparation for his master’s return.

“What could we call it, David?” he asked. “Got an idea?”

“Not yet.”

“What’s the word they always use in connection with coffee—good coffee?”

“You mean aroma?”

“That’s it. Why can’t we call it ‘Aroma Coffee’?”

“Too obvious. Besides you can’t copyright a descriptive adjective.”

The two sipped their highballs thoughtfully, gazing at the wood fire which threw its warm, leaping light like a huge fan, softly waving to and

fro over the shadowy slumberous brown walls, the silky rugs, the vivid Chinese porcelains and touched the Sorolla so that its lone figure stood out like a thing alive. David stretched out a hand and seized a pad and pencil from the adjacent desk. He wrote various words upon the white paper, stopping occasionally to gaze at his work as a painter squints at his canvas.

“How ’s that?” he asked, holding the pad so that John Powell could see the single word he had placed in large letters upon a fresh sheet. “Just by placing an ‘M’ in front of ‘aroma’ we get a good name—‘Maroma.’ ”

“Damn good!” said John Powell, after a moment’s consideration.

“Shall I go ahead with the design of the labels?”

“Sure! We ’ll give ’em that Connoisseur Blend. It ’s cheap and a fine flavor but it never took under its old name. People did n’t know how to pronounce it.”

He drew on his cigar slowly, his eyes half closed. Presently without moving, he said, “We ’ve traveled a long way, David, you and I, the last few years. But we ’re going farther, much farther. We ’re not through yet—not by a long shot. You just stick to me. I need you and I ’m willing to pay you what you ’re worth. How much are you getting now?”

“Six thousand.”

“Satisfied?”

“Yes.”

“Well, that is n’t the stopping place, understand. I ’ll get you into the firm one of these days. But don’t get married. That ’ll end it all. Takes the go out of a man, all the creative power”—he waved his hand—“kills his imagination.”

CHAPTER VI

SO swift was the rush of events the first two years David spent in New York, so breathlessly was his day filled from the time the Japanese valet called him in the morning till he fell into bed again usually long after midnight, that he had no leisure for thought. For two years he did not ask himself those familiar questions, "Is this it? Is this what I want out of life?"

The changing seasons flew by, winter flowed into spring, spring melted into summer, and he was barely conscious of their passing.

But even the charm of work that called for all the imagination he could give it and even the novelty of living with all the careless and beautiful ease that money can buy, palled in time. He discovered a flaw in the golden and overflowing cup from which he now drank.

He still thrilled to John Powell's talk of national commercial conquests, of the completion of order and efficiency in a business in which there had been little but chaos and blundering, but John Powell was often away of late on trips to the

Chicago branch or the San Francisco branch, and while he was away affairs did not run so industriously down at the big new building of B. Foster and Company. With the main dynamo absent the machinery slackened a little; the clerks did not rush so quickly from desk to desk with their papers; the office manager was less strict about punching the time clocks; even the porters down in the shipping rooms loaded the bags and boxes upon the waiting line of motor trucks with less vivacity. And almost unconsciously David found himself a party to this general letting up in the pace. Often he sat idle at his desk while old doubts and resolutions long dormant, began to assert themselves.

One day—it was a day of young April and from the window at which he sat he could see the roofs of the City glimmering after a shower which had been quickly succeeded by dazzling sunlight—he caught himself wondering whether there was not more to life than this piling up of profits, this mad desire to make money, more and more money, disguise the game as you would under such high sounding names as efficiency and creative business enterprise. He realized that he had in a modest way achieved that ambition which had been born of dark waters and a tortured soul, the ambition to make himself a material success, to prove that

he could be such a success. And now he was hungry for some other purpose. A great and unmistakable void had opened up within him. He needed a purpose, a worthy purpose to set him going again. But what purpose?

He found, too, in this new phase of questioning, that he was beginning to lose his enthusiasm for the dinner parties, the dances, the entire round of gay festivities, enacted chiefly in the restaurants, which at first had seemed so brilliant and so alluring, so completely—yes, he confessed it—the aim and end of existence. The smart chatter of well-dressed, well-gowned people, the sophisticated comments on plays and books and morals and on life generally, that had once impressed him with their cleverness and intelligence, now had a hollow ring to his ears.

At this time, too, he became quite well acquainted with Evelyn Foster, the daughter of the senior partner, and, after listening so long to the innuendoes and self-revelations of the women to whom John Powell had introduced him, he found her innocence and naïveté wonderfully attractive. . . .

He passed several months in this state with a feeling of hopeless futility.

John Powell celebrated his return from San

Francisco by having a dinner party in his own apartment. He had the dinner served by a famous restaurant and from the wide circle of his friends he picked the flower to grace his board that night.

"I want them all to be good sports," he said to David, the evening of the dinner. "This is going to be a real party. I've been planning it all the way back from the coast."

"You are counting on me?" asked David.

"Of course I'm counting on you."

"I wish you'd let me out of it."

John Powell scrutinized him from beneath his heavy eyebrows. "What's the matter? Ill?"

David shook his head. "Just out of sorts. I'm getting so tired—so deadly tired of this sort of thing."

John Powell tipped his cigar at an acute angle. "In love?" he shot at David.

David did not answer and after a pause, John Powell swung on his heel and threw over his shoulder: "We'll talk this over after the party. There's not time now. But I hope you'll stick. It'll be damn inconvenient if you leave a place vacant now."

So David "stuck."

It was the type of party which a few months ago would have left him breathless with anticipation. It was made up of what some New York satirist

once called, "Our best lobster palace society." Strange creatures these, who live in small rooms tucked away in huge hotels so that they may emerge into the rosy glare of restaurants and theaters, gowned in silks and velvets, brilliant with diamonds, dragging their males after them; whose only interests are eating and drinking and gossiping, seeing and being seen; who in summer fly from the heat of the city to some resort which as nearly as possible approximates their beloved Broadway—Atlantic City, Long Beach or, if they have funds sufficient, some French watering place.

There came to John Powell's rooms that night—it was late September—Lily Carello, formerly of grand opera but now, owing to a fondness for sweets and wine, uplifting the comic opera stage; her husband, Lester Ford, the novelist; Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Pettit, whose entrance in a restaurant was the signal for all the headwaiters to rush forward and bow; there came also Paul DeWay, a ghost of a man with sunken eyes and thin sneering lips, who, it was claimed by his friends, had the cleverest tongue in New York; Mrs. Arthur Jackson, a dowdy middle-aged woman whose antics were the delight of the yellow newspapers; Harold Lee, who was doing his utmost to do away with the fortune his father had left him; and, in addition, three young women who belonged neither to the

stage nor society but by considerable dexterity managed to maintain a foothold somewhere between the two.

A typical gathering, thought David bitterly, as he sat back in his chair surveying them while the waiters sent by the restaurant, placed mushrooms, filet of sole, breast of young turkey and numerous other things before him and kept his glasses filled to the brim with sparkling wines, red and white and pale gold. A typical gathering on which all the high ambitions, the lofty purposes of his youth were shipwrecked, lost.

While the talk bubbled and laughed with the champagne, while Lily Carello sang in a throaty voice, one of Musetta's arias—a part which had helped to make her famous—John Powell sat at the head of the table, his head a little to one side, smiling slightly as if he were an emperor who had commanded these people to come before him and amuse him. And, indeed, he had. With his money, which was power, he had spread this feast before them, set them dancing, their tongues feverishly clacking for his amusement. David thought he detected beneath John Powell's smile a shade of derision, of contempt, as he gave his ear to Lily Carello, who with upraised, clasped hands, whispered to him.

The waiters, moving with incredible softness

and rapidity, cleared away the debris of the dinner and left little gold-banded cups of black coffee and tiny thimble-like glasses and crystal bottles shining with deeply, beautifully colored brandies. David studied the waiters to see if they, too, were contemptuous of these people whom they served so skilfully, but their white smooth faces were blank with an ecstasy of devotion; they did not seem to have any eyes.

Presently the three colored musicians who had played discreetly all during dinner struck up a loud and quick refrain; the harpist threw back his head and attacked the strings as if he had suddenly gone mad; the violinist swayed to and fro; the banjoist beat on his instrument as if he were sounding a summons in the depths of an African forest.

The floor was cleared and every one arose, found a partner, and whirled around in an abandon of movement. . . .

It was after four when the last taxicab waiting below clattered away.

John Powell caught David's arm. "Don't go to bed," he said; "I want to talk with you. Now tell me what's the matter with you."

"Nothing's the matter except that I'm thoroughly sick of this sort of life—like to-night. I want something more decent, less artificial."

“You ’ve got your work, have n’t you? That ’s decent enough, is n’t it?”

“Yes, but even that in the last analysis is nothing more nor less than making money. I ’d like to do something that would do people good, would make—oh, it sounds awfully foolish, I know—but that would make the world a better place to live in.”

“The trouble is you ’ve had too much time on your hands while I ’ve been away,” said John Powell savagely. “You ’ve been brooding—and you ’re young. Got too much idealism left. Don’t you know there ’s nothing in idealism—just dream stuff—never gets you anywhere. Look at the reformers when they get in office—just make a mess of things, just putter. It ’s the trained politicians who give us a good government. What if they do get their little graft for doing it? It ’s the men who take off their coats and get to work without any thought of ideals or reforms that accomplish things.”

“Those people who were here to-night are not accomplishing much.”

“Do you imagine I take them seriously? If I did I would n’t have them here. I want relief, relaxation, so I can go back to work to-morrow refreshed, renewed. Study people, make use of them, this man for this purpose, that woman for

that purpose. But don't let them make use of you. That 's my philosophy."

"That 's why you 're making use of me?"

"Sure, it is. But it 's paying you, is n't it? Besides, that is n't why I asked you to come and live with me. I liked you. I was weak enough to feel that I needed some one to whom I could give a little more of myself than I gave to the mob of them—and that 's my confidence. And now you 're thinking of chucking me."

He was walking excitedly up and down the room with short, jerky steps. His large face was very red with the wine he had drunk, and David thought that he looked more than ever like Mr. Punch. But he found no amusement in the thought.

After a brief silence, Powell turned on him again with: "Who 's the girl?"

"What girl?"

"Oh, there 's some girl, some sweet, young thing responsible for all these new fancies of yours."

David hesitated, decided not to name her, and impulsively came out with: "It 's Evelyn Foster."

"That milk-face? Why, she 's like her father. She 's not a girl; she 's a pattern."

"Please—" began David.

But John Powell, his face still more flushed, cut him short with a wave of his hand. "Don't expect me to sentimentalize, my boy. I 'm too old.

Purity, innocence, sweet girlish charm—why, my God, David, if you marry her she 'll make you walk a path so narrow you 'll never be able to look around you—just ahead, always straight ahead. Whatever put her into your head? Ambition?"

"You mean, am I marrying her because she 's Avery Foster's daughter?"

"Yes."

David clenched his fists. "I wish she were n't."

"You 'll get ahead all right without that boost. I 'll see to that."

"You don't understand."

"For Heaven's sake, David, don't spring that old romantic stuff. Let 's talk like men—not like heroes of a second-rate melodrama. I understand all right. She 's caught you in the net of her gentle pose of knowing nothing about this horrible world. My God, nobody has the right to claim any virtue for knowing nothing at this stage of existence. Damned ignorance, I call it. Worse than ignorance—damn pretense. Nobody can help knowing things what with newspapers and books full of sex, sex, sex, as if there were nothing else. I know Evelyn Foster, know her well. She 's her grandfather all over again. 'No, we can't do that, I 'm afraid. It is n't ethical.' I can hear her saying it now just as he used to say it—holding things back, blocking 'em, keeping you from

growing, growing, growing. Don't I know? Didn't I have twenty years of it? And now you're letting yourself in for the same thing. And marriage is a much more ticklish affair than business, David."

Presently in his perambulations he came to a halt beside David and laid his hand on his shoulder. "I'd rather see you marry that Honeywell girl who was here to-night. She's fast as Hell but she knows men—knows they can't be tied down to a perfectly respectable life—and keep growing. Evelyn's an angel—an ignorant angel. They're the hardest kind. Think it over, David."

He waited but David did not speak, so he said, "Well, I'm going to bed. Good night."

David did not move for some time after John Powell had left him. He sat staring at the burnt-out embers of the wood fire and he was thinking as he had thought so many times of late, ever since he had come to know Evelyn Foster, how utterly sick at heart he was of this pagan life he had been living. Of its uselessness. Of its purposelessness. Two years of it. More than two years of it, for he supposed ever since he had left Bay Ridge, abandoning the idealism of his youth, he had lived a pagan life, an absolutely material life in which his whole idea, the one thing which had animated him, had been to forge ahead, to be a

success. And this silly snatching at pleasure, dead fruit from a metal tree. Where had it led him? To such women as Lena Honeywell, to such a life as to-night's party had typified.

And David thought of all the women he had known. A troop of rustling, smiling shadows flitted by. First, Nora Davenport, dear Nora—she was, indeed, a shadow now, worn almost into oblivion by the many impressions that had crowded to efface her. And he thought next—a little sadly and furtively—of Nell Ferguson. He had never ceased to reproach himself (when he thought of it which, alas, was not often!) of the part he had played in Nell's life, although she had told him never to blame himself. Perhaps that was why he did reproach himself, because of her generosity, her unbelievable unselfishness.

He never saw Nell now. She had left B. Foster and Company's employ, sought a position elsewhere. Perhaps because of him, perhaps because she could not bear the sight of him as a stranger.

Then he thought of that gay and seductive creature John Powell had called the Honeywell girl. But he thought but briefly of her; there were too many others like her; women of a night, of a mad week—of a season's infatuation perhaps.

Last he thought of Evelyn Foster. She seemed like a tender and delicate flower, white-petaled,

fresh, fragile, against the background of gleaming, passionate blooms he had known. The thought of her was like a wave of air deliciously fragrant, breaking over him.

"If only I were half good enough for her," he muttered bitterly.

But he felt he was not—never could be; the slate of his life was heavily marked and scratched. And still he could not help but hope.

She could aid him to start anew—if she only would—to begin all over again, to generate a new and useful, decent life—simple, sincere, fine.

Into that room sickly with the atmosphere of dead flowers and burnt cigarettes, flickering with the dimness of pink-shaded candles, crept the clear light of morning. David lifted his eyes to it with a tense expression on his face. As that pure light came into the murkiness of the room so would Evelyn come into his life, he thought.

And with that image of her, he went to bed.

CHAPTER VII

AS far back as the days in which he had slaved away at the billing desk, David had caught visions of Evelyn Foster. She occasionally came to the office to meet her father, to accompany him home or perhaps, to lunch with him. A fair visitor from another world she had seemed to David in those days, a being remote and alien, one of the blessed few who dwelt in the clouds while he toiled with the millions bound to the earth. Once when he was struggling in a jam of people trying to fight his way to a trolley car at the New York end of Brooklyn Bridge, he had seen her handling the reins of her smart little trap, taking her father home, while the groom, arms folded, sat behind, and it seemed to him he was only one of thousands who followed her with envious eyes.

She was quite young when he had seen her first, for he remembered her hair worn in a loosely tied strand hanging down her back. Beautiful hair it was, of a gold so pale it was more silver than gold.

Later, of course, as he rose from the ranks, he came to meet her. It was after he was made ad-

vertising manager of the concern that Mr. Foster first introduced him to her. She wore her hair high on her head, then, partially concealed beneath a little, round, black fox hat that added sheen and luster to the silvery-gold hair; and he remembered how the color mounted to her thin and delicate cheeks as she said, "I begged father to introduce me, Mr. Wells. He says you've done so many wonderful things in the business. I don't quite understand what—I'm awfully stupid about business. Won't you come to tea some afternoon and tell me something about it?"

She telephoned him a day or two later, repeating the invitation and naming an afternoon.

He went only to be so impressed, so awed by the big brown Foster house on Brooklyn Heights, by the butler in livery and by the chattering, high-voiced group of young people surrounding Evelyn Foster, that he got no enjoyment out of the event. Afternoon teas, butlers, and young ladies with a distinguished manner were altogether beyond him at that time—he was still living in the boarding house in Brooklyn and had not yet profited by the example of the restaurant society of New York. He tried to pretend he was enjoying the tea with lemon in it that Miss Foster handed him and that he understood the conversation about dances and country clubs and motors, but he knew that his

pretense was a poor success. And he was absurdly conscious of a button that somehow, at this most unfortunate moment, had detached itself from the coat of his blue sack suit.

"I say, old man, don't you think the French cars have it all over the American?" said a youth beside him, in a dark gray, tight-fitting cutaway.

"I don't know," David confessed, conscious that the youth gave his answer a disgusted stare.

But despite the failure of that encounter, David did not lose interest in Evelyn Foster, nor she in him. The next time she invited him to tea, which was some months later, he had moved to New York. And one of the first things he bought was an afternoon coat of dark gray. So he went to the big Foster house with assurance, confident that he would meet Evelyn Foster's friends on their own ground. But he found her alone except for her mother, a stout, matronly woman, who talked of the weather and how much she admired wholesome young men, in such a pleasant and commonplace way that she did not frighten him in the least . . . and after a little while she withdrew unobtrusively.

The rear windows of the Foster house opened on the harbor, and the sun had fallen behind the huge pile of buildings opposite, leaving a long string of gray clouds against a sky that was like a

strip of salmon-colored silk. A pageant of boats, black against the dark blue water, constantly passed up and down, and presently David found himself telling the girl opposite him of how, as a child, he had sat upon the rocks of the Bay Ridge shore, and tried to imagine what the City would come to mean to him.

She listened intently, her lips slightly parted, the lace on her bosom falling and rising slightly with her breathing.

"Is n't it splendid," she said, "that your dreams should come true—that you should come to the City and conquer—make a name for yourself—create success out of nothing?"

"A very modest name—a very small success."

"Oh, but you are just beginning"—she leaned towards him with clasped hands—"Father says you have such good ideas and that Mr. Powell leaves so much in your hands for you to carry through."

"But his are the ideas!"

"I know, but I am sure putting them into execution is half the task. I suppose you are very fond of Mr. Powell. You are living with him now, are n't you?"

"Yes. He's the biggest man I've ever met."

"You'll think it very silly of me to criticize," she said with a little self-deprecating movement

of her hands. "While I admire him, I don't like him. He gives me the impression that he would stop at nothing to gain his ends. He's so aggressive and so—well, so uncouth. I don't believe he thinks of anything but money. As if there were n't so many bigger, finer things in the world . . . things of the spirit—it's so hard to express what I mean."

"I think I know what you mean," said David huskily, and he thought, beautiful as the harbor was in the afterglow of sunset, she was more beautiful; in her white dress, she was like a silver spirit drooping in the wicker chair.

"I thought perhaps you would rather come here while I was alone," her voice went on a little hesitantly, broken most charmingly into halting syllables. "You didn't feel at home with all that crowd before, did you? I don't blame you. Strangers always embarrass me, too. But then father and mother have always kept me so sheltered from people—from people and things—too much sheltered, I sometimes think."

"I have n't been sheltered," laughed David.

"No, of course, you have n't. But then there's no reason why you should be. It's different with a girl . . . I don't suppose girls should know too much about life . . . it's so horrid really, is n't it?"

And David thought how delicious it would be to take her frail body in his arms and protect her forevermore from the advancing forces of life, the things that were—indeed, he knew too well!—"horrid," bestially "horrid."

But intimate as that conversation had seemed, David did not see much of Evelyn Foster for a year or two. His new life in New York occupied him so thoroughly that he made no attempt to see her, but she stayed in the hinterland of his consciousness, a very charming and restful personality. Then, one summer, she invited him to spend a week down at her father's country place on Long Island, and these seven days, filled with bathing and sailing parties, of evenings on a moonlit veranda and long walks by day along the sand dunes, brought them much nearer together.

That was the summer he experienced his first reaction from the gay life to which John Powell had introduced him, and Evelyn Foster seemed to personify all the things to which he had set his eyes in contrast with all the things which had grown nauseating to him.

At first, of course, he had no more idea of marrying her than the mariner has of possessing the star which guides his course. She was utterly unattainable. She was like a water lily blossoming over the brackish waters of the pool

—the muddy pool—which his life had become.

But as that summer passed and the autumn advanced—an autumn so protracted that it held summer's ardor in a cooler clasp until far in December—he began to hope and to wonder. Evelyn's soft and elusive personality began to dominate his thoughts, to fill his brain with a very sweet and intoxicating perfume.

She was kind to him. It was a constant marvel to him how kind she was. Once he said to her, "Could you forgive—many unforgivable things in a man's life, Evelyn? Things that he does not realize the hideousness of until he meets an absolutely good and innocent woman?"

She flushed a little as if the subject were distasteful to her and gave him a wide and uncomprehending stare. But presently a little tremulously she said, "I'm so ignorant of the forces that govern a man's life—and of the temptations that beset him. But I do realize that a man is fashioned differently from a woman—is less accountable perhaps, is sometimes forced into things."

He took courage at her words and set forth to press his suit with swift purpose. He was amazed that his Goddess combined such wisdom with such innocence.

And when he asked her to marry him one March

afternoon she consented very simply, very sweetly. "I knew that you were going to ask me some day, David," she said, smiling up at him although her eyes were wet with tears. "I shan't make any of the silly remarks a woman is supposed to make at a proposal. I shall be very glad to marry you, my dear."

To David's further surprise there was no opposition on the part of either Mr. Foster or his wife. It was not until later that David learned that their opinions concerning their daughter's interest and affairs were supplied them, for the greater part, by the daughter herself.

CHAPTER VIII

“**S**O you ’ve committed yourself!” cried John Powell, when David told him of his engagement. “Well, I suppose it had to be. But I ’m damned if I ’ll congratulate you. Why should I? What are you to be congratulated on? You ’re through with progress—that ’s what you are. Don’t I know Evelyn Foster? Haven’t I seen her grow up to own her father and mother, body and soul, to start them dancing at her bidding as if they were dolls stuffed with sawdust? She ’s been petted and pampered all her life. She ’s the final personification of all this American sentimentalism about women—a sweet girly girl, crowned as if she were an empress, treated as if she were a goddess. I don’t know that it ’s all her fault. Circumstances have made her. Now she ’s taking you for a husband because she thinks she can run you as she runs her parents. You ’ll be more of a waiter than a husband.”

“She ’s marrying me because she loves me,” said David stoutly. “What other reason could she have? Who am I? What can I offer her that she does not already possess?”

“Oh, as for that, she ’s probably come to care for you somewhat. All emotion has n’t been flattered out of her. And you ’re too modest. There are a lot of things about you that make you a desirable possession. You ’ve got a good-looking face and a well set up body and a fair intelligence. You ’re amiable and kind and in evening clothes you almost look like a gentleman. What more could Evelyn Foster ask for? If she were poor, she ’d demand money in addition. But she ’s got more money than she ’ll ever need and so you ’re a logical selection. Probably you ’re still a little rude and uncouth, as she ’d put it, but she ’ll enjoy polishing and shining you and making you a decoration to the home and an ornament to society.”

David laughed. “I bought my first cutaway to go to one of her teas.”

“And by that showed her you were amenable to her requirements”—he sat puffing at his cigar thoughtfully, his face set in a scowl, his heavy jaw pressed against the chest that rose to meet it. Presently he lifted his fist and brought it down with a resounding crash on the table. “Where will go all our big plans and projects now! Bang! Exploded! Up into the thin air. I ’ll have two reactionaries in the firm of B. Foster and Company to deal with now. It ’s a hell of a way to pay me back for the interest I ’ve taken in you—

a selfish interest, I admit—I saw I could use you.”— He quieted again and finally gave a long sigh of resignation. “Well, I can see your side of it. I don’t suppose I ought to blame you. Why should you worry about anything? You said your ambition was to be a successful business man and now you’re capping that ambition by marrying a rich wife. You’ll run around in your motor, you’ll go with the best people, as they call themselves; you’ll get to think more of what Mrs. La-di-da said about your wife’s newest evening gown than you ever did about creating a big, national business.”

David jumped to his feet angrily. “Why should you think I shall ever be such an idiot?”

John Powell rose after him and seizing his arm swung him around roughly so that he could see into his eyes. After a moment he said, shaking his head a little sadly, “What’s the use of my ranting in this way? You’ll have to work out your own destiny, my boy. Maybe you won’t settle down to—to oblivion. Maybe you’re not through. But there’s a long fight ahead of you. I know Evelyn Foster and her kind too well. She’ll want all of you—or none of you. You’ll be happier perhaps if you let her have her way.”

It was easy for David to toss aside John Powell’s

warnings with a slightly contemptuous shake of his head. What did he know about women—good women? On his own confession he preferred the other kind. And so without any appreciation of the finer, truer type of womanhood, how could he be expected to understand them? Besides he was too full of Evelyn Foster's charm to think of much else. He was passionately devoted to her, he admired too intensely all those little evasions, those little aloofnesses that were a part of her. He was happy just to sit opposite her and watch her daintily pick an orange apart or lift a cup to her lips with a grace that was all her own.

He even did his work better, he told himself, his perceptions were keener, his judgment clearer because of her. She was an inspiration to him. Certainly he did go through his tasks with a vim and energy that cleaned them up quickly, left part of his afternoons free to devote to her. At half-past three or four he walked past John Powell's office in which the latter was bent over his desk or pacing the floor dictating letters to a stenographer with an air of bravado that said, "Find a flaw in my day's work if you can!"

One spring afternoon he was hurrying up Fifth Avenue to meet Evelyn at the Hotel Manhattan where they were to have tea together. He had

passed Fortieth Street and was in front of the new library, when the face of a woman coming down the avenue toward him made him blink his eyes incredulously. Ten years slipped away from him and he was a boy on the Bay Ridge shore again. . . . It seemed to him that Nora saw him the instant that he saw her. He came to a dead and breathless stop; then sprang forward to meet her outstretched hand with his.

“Hello!” he cried, “Nora, is it really you?”—and found he could say no more. They stepped close to the marble railing, out of the way of the stream of passersby, and a minute later were chatting as light heartedly and familiarly as if they had parted amidst flowers and sunshine only yesterday.

That was the best, the finest part of the meeting, thought David afterwards, that here after ten years, with all the chasms and gaps and wide differences that a decade brings, that here they were to meet again and feel as if the years had never been.

He had a hundred questions to ask her; a hundred questions parched his lips. Where was she living? What had become of Bradford? Had she married him? Was she still living with him? They were questions which had forced themselves

upon him time and again since the night she had said good-by to him in another world down in the little red house.

But he found that he could ask her none of these questions. He could simply gaze at her as if his eyes would never get their fill. She had changed a little—but not much. Some of the bravery, the flame of her bearing, had gone; her gray eyes had saddened a little; it seemed they had grown darker, the long eyelashes a little heavier; the lines of her firm lips drooped a little. Nevertheless she was the same dear Nora; her eyes rose to his as steadily as ever and her hand was as firmly given, her clasp as unfaltering as of old—oh, she was the same Nora! There was no mistaking it. Suddenly a vast and golden reassurance flooded his soul . . . if she had not changed then things were All Right with her—a thousand demons bowed their heads, a thousand strings within him leaped into harmony.

And while his thoughts were thus pouring torrentially beneath the surface, they talked of trivial things, their words were empty and meaningless . . . and presently they realized this.

David glowed with an inspiration. “Why not go back to the beach to-morrow, Nora? I’ve never been back. We can talk there—really talk. We can tell each other everything about ourselves.

We'll spend the whole afternoon there. Why not?"

Nora's eyes were shadowy with reflections. "I don't think it would do—"

"Please, Nora."

"Well, perhaps. It won't be the same though."

"I know but let's go and see."

"All right," she capitulated, with a smile that showed her surrender was complete.

They agreed to meet at the Thirty-ninth Street ferry at two o'clock the following day. David proposed taking a taxicab down but Nora laughed mockingly, "Is that the way you're going back, David? What had our childhood to do with taxicabs? Where's the illusion? What has happened to your imagination?"

So they parted reluctantly but full of the morrow.

"Why are you so quiet, David?" asked Evelyn Foster, at tea, later. "You look as if your thoughts were miles away. And you haven't passed me the toast."

"I met a friend this afternoon I haven't seen in years—not since I left Bay Ridge."

"A woman?"

"Yes."

Evelyn asked nothing more and he decided not

to tell her of the morrow's excursion. That, he thought, belonged only to Nora and himself, was dedicated to the dream-days of the past.

CHAPTER IX

AS David hurried across South Street, he caught sight of Nora coming from the Subway station. He watched her as she paused before the little flower stand that nestled tucked in the wall beside the entrance to South Ferry. David ran toward her, beckoning.

“The boat ’s in, Nora,” he called. “Hurry!”

She looked up, smiled a greeting, and came hurrying after him, her hands full of sweet peas. The guard laughingly held the gate open for them until they slid through.

The boat was comparatively deserted, for it was hours before it would receive its freight of home-goers. They mounted to the upper deck and placed camp chairs in the shelter of the pilot house so that it would protect them from the wind. The bright sunlight glittered on the deck around them and on the waters so blindingly that they could not gaze upon it.

“Well?” asked Nora, after they were settled and after David had regarded her in silence long enough. She had on a plain dark blue suit and she

had pinned the sweet peas against her bosom so that they fluttered in the spent breeze that drifted around the pilot house; she wore smart, mannish little brown boots and a small felt hat with a feather stuck in it at exactly the right angle—a hat which made David think of Rosalind in the forest of Arden.

“Well, what?” asked David.

“What are we going to talk about?”

“A million things. First of all, where have you been?”

“Only for the past year in New York.”

“That’s why I’ve never seen you. I looked everywhere for years. Finally, I gave up. I thought you were lost to me forever. Are you here permanently now?”

“I’m living in Brooklyn—in the remotest part of Brooklyn.”

“Not Bay Ridge?”

“No, quite the other end of Brooklyn.”

The boat was now rounding Governor’s Island; the old fort stood out in faded brick over which the sunlight threw kind mellow shadows; dredges were at work filling in new ground, adding a long tongue of land like the tail of a kite to the island. “Everything is changing and being changed,” said Nora. “I wonder if we will find Bay Ridge changed?”

"I don't know; I hope not," said David thoughtfully and a little sadly.

They watched the Brooklyn shore slip by, low at the water's edge, with many covered wharves and square warehouses, rising beyond in dwellings, interspersed with the steeples of churches; presently, the high fence that shuts in Erie Basin was before them and beyond, at a height, the melancholy trees and grass of Greenwood.

Nora and David spoke but little; they were content to be with each other again. Their hearts beat high with the spirits of memory and of adventure.

The boat ran into the slip with a gentle thud, and at the landing they boarded an open trolley car. Here it was no longer the place of open lots and ramshackle buildings that they remembered. A terminal company had taken possession of the surrounding territory and erected towering factories of gray concrete and warehouses and built wharves that pushed their hooded heads far out into the bay.

It was not until they were past Sixty-fifth Street, once called City Line, however, that they reached the regions they had really known. Here it became appallingly evident what tremendous changes the City's growth had brought about in the past ten years. At Sixty-ninth Street there was still

the cluster of low wooden stores to which David, as a boy, had been sent on errands almost daily, but all around them had risen block after block of red brick flat-houses with the ground floors given to shiny new shops. The trees that had formerly arched their branches over the street were all gone to make way for the flagstone pavements and the relentless telegraph and telephone wires.

Nora and David alighted from the car at Seventy-third Street and walked toward the Shore Road. The flat-houses and shops did not extend below Third Avenue, but along these side streets little villas lay in orderly rows, with spiked railings guarding them and spare grass plots in front—villas all hopelessly alike, swinging into view one after another with patterned monotony.

They walked on down streets cut recently through the meadows they remembered with daisies and clover in bloom. Finally the orderly and settled rows of villas were left behind and they came upon a riot of fresh upheavals just breaking ground like monstrous plants putting forth leaves and sprouts of wood and plaster. Already in their incipient state, they were labeled, "These Little Mansions for Sale at Reasonable Prices."

Here it was immeasurably drearier than before

for the low meadows still bled with their wounds—dark red piles of earth lay on the green grass and scaffolding and lath and plaster spread itself everywhere. Trees and bushes were broken or stuck their heads forlornly through the debris as if watching patiently the approach of their inevitable doom. And in and out of the litter moved the busy builders, whistling at their work; the sound of their hammering and sawing and shouting split the air.

At last David and Nora reached First Avenue—the Shore Road was only a block distant. As yet the City had spared this part—only an occasional new house rose knee deep and alien in the meadows with a thin path trodden brown leading to its door.

Out of the depths of her disappointment Nora whispered hopefully, “I think the Shore Road will still be the same, David; that’s all that really counts.”

But when they reached the Shore Road the changes were cruelest of all.

For those mysterious beings who masquerade under the name of Authority had cut down all the trees and bushes and wild growth which had formerly flourished in abandon along the cliffside. Everything was now severely in order as if a hot iron had been passed over it. The banks of the

cliff were smoothed down and robbed of the delightful crevices on which flowers had once bloomed and from which vines and bushes had flung flowering arms to greet the sea. All was gone! Instead, the cliff sloped gently to the sand and it was evenly sodded with close-clipped grass, broken with brown and yellow patches . . .

The sun beat down starkly on law and order; the breeze was gone.

David did not look at Nora. He was heartsick. He was bitterly disillusioned. He had come back here with Nora to visit the scenes of their childhood—and he had found them so utterly and sadly changed. And it made him think of how his life was changed, too, of how all the dear fancies and hopes of his youth had been pressed out of him, leaving him a solid and unimaginative business man. What right had he to memories? . . . Their excursion so eagerly planned was settling down into a dismal failure.

They walked down the slope of grass to the beach. Nora refused David's hand and he thought of the day she had refused to let him help her over the rocks.

"Bet I can beat you swimming," he said, summoning up spirit enough to smile into her face, and when she flashed back at him, "Bet you can't!" it brought a little gaiety back to them.

“Let ’s go down to the rocks and sit there and talk,” suggested David.

“Yes, let ’s,” she agreed.

But they looked for the string of rocks in vain. They had been removed to make way for a break-water of concrete, filled with rock, which kept the sea out of the tiny cove and turned it into a placid pool of slumbering water.

Suddenly Nora halted and exclaimed: “Why even the little red house, your little red house, is gone!”

David nodded; he had already noticed it. “Yes, I ’m glad it is. It has no place here.”

“Yes, I ’m glad it ’s gone,” Nora agreed, after a minute.

They made their way out upon a new dock bearing a freshly painted sign, “City Property—No Trespassing,” and settled themselves on the far edge where a ledge offered a seat. In the distance, as of old, the City, swathed in veils, loomed against the horizon.

“Do you remember how you used to sit here and dream of what the City would mean to you? What it would do to you?” asked Nora.

Very soberly David nodded.

“What has it done, David?”

And he told her. Everything he told her. Of the dreary years spent in Brooklyn boarding

houses, of Nell Ferguson, of B. Foster & Company and John Powell and, finally, of the success that had come to him.

“The keys of the City,” Nora said, after he had concluded; “to think, after all, David, that they should be presented to you.”

“Presented to me?”

“Well, the keys to the City are success and the money it brings. They open all doors.”

David remembered, then, how he had told her of the famous man who had come to a great city and been presented with its keys, and how he had wondered and hoped that he might be so famous some day that the keys of their city would be given to him.

They sat in silence for a time. Nora had her back to a post, her head tilted so that it rested against it; her white veil was lifted and her eyes closed. The sweet peas at her bosom, a little wilted, were very fragrant. David studying her face, abruptly realized she was older. She looked tired now. How old was she? A year younger than he. She was over thirty! He could hardly credit it . . . oh, the years, the swift silent years! . . . One of her heavy tan gloves slipped from her lap and he stooped to pick it up, retaining it in his hand, turning it over and over with a curious expression in his eyes. And now he

thought how strange it was that he knew nothing of Nora, of her life for the past ten years although sitting beside her she seemed so near and so utterly familiar to him. As if in answer to his thoughts, when he looked up, he found Nora's eyes upon him. He flushed slightly and dropped the glove upon her lap. For a moment longer they stayed silent while the waters gurgled and sucked at the piers of the dock below them; then Nora said:

"I suppose you want my story now?"

"Not unless you want to tell—"

"I want to tell you, David."

"I want to hear very much—oh, very much," he confessed.

She paused as if loath to begin while he waited intent.

"I've left Walter Bradford."

"You never married him?"

"No."

"You're living alone?"

"Yes. I'm making my own living."

"How?"

For a full minute she did not answer; then, finally: "I suppose it's simpler to begin at the beginning. When I ran away with Walter I determined to stick to him forever. Even after I found that I no longer cared for him it seemed the

only thing for me to do—the only way to keep afloat. When a woman takes a step of that kind, you know, things pull at her, pull downward all the time—other men find out and take weaknesses for granted.”

David asked savagely: “Bradford treated you well?”

She nodded. “He grew quite to respect me—oh, that was hard, David—to make him respect me. He had affairs with other women; he could not get along without excitement of that kind; it was what he lived for. And I got so that I—I did not mind them. They came and went, all more or less mercenary and vile. But he got so that he no longer classed me with those other women; he got to look upon me almost as a wife; at least, as a fixture, a habit. Do you understand what I mean? He used to come to me with his petty little sorrows and failures. I was his harbor, his home. He grew quite fond of me in that way—”

“And you?”

“I thought there was nothing else for me to do—that it was my only salvation. I came to believe that a woman should bow her head to convention, she must regard what people say, what they think. When I started out I didn’t think so. I began life by thinking I could do as I pleased. I wanted to have the same liberty a man

has. But I just went—smash. You know I've always hated muck—I didn't want that sort of liberty. But I wanted freedom, freedom to act and talk and think as I pleased. Of course circumstances played their part in smashing me. . . . With a man it's different. The world makes it awfully hard for a woman to be brave and independent and fearless. Once let her step outside the palings and the wolves are at her, leaping for her throat. . . . It takes courage . . . David, if it had n't been for you, if I had n't remembered you all those years, I should have thought all men beasts. I should have given up. For when I realized the trap I had so willingly stepped into, I became reckless. But at last I decided to make the best of it. I decided the only thing for me to do was to stick to Walter until death came to him or to me. For six years I endured it . . . and then I changed."

There was another silence while David waited. Nora relaxed from the rigidness which held her; she leaned her head against the post again and closed her eyes. It was in this attitude, that she presently resumed:

"Then another man came into my life—Carl Ellis—a Westerner from Colorado; a clean, strong man, crude, simple, wonderfully tender. Walter knew him in a business way. We were living in

Chicago then and Walter brought him home to dinner at our little apartment near the Lake front. He came several times. He thought that I was Walter's wife. Suddenly he discovered—I don't know how—that I was n't. It broke him all up. I had n't known he cared for me until then—he was one of the few men who would n't let a married woman know, not even by a look. He went back to Colorado. Before he went I told him my whole story—as you know it, David. He heard of you, too, of what you had meant to me. He wept for me—that huge man weeping . . . it was awful, actually awful. So he went home. I have never heard from him nor seen him since although I wrote him when I came East."

"You loved him!" asked David huskily.

"No, but I wanted him to know I had broken away from Walter—and all that."

"How did it come about?"

"Well, after Carl had gone I got to thinking things over slowly; you know how a thing keeps revolving in your mind, creeping upon you gradually until you can't think of anything else. I began to ask myself if after all, it was the right thing to stick to Walter—if it were the only thing to do. And at last it seemed to me it was n't—that I should get away—make my own living. How? That was the next question. So I studied stenog-

raphy and typewriting, went to school while Walter was at business. At last I felt I knew enough to take a chance. So I cut loose—I left Walter.”

“How did he act?”

“There was a scene. His wife had died a year or so before. He offered to marry me. But the offer came too late. My heart was mad with the thought of freedom. . . . Well, I finally got a position at starvation wages but I managed to keep on and I got a better position. At last, after a year, I had saved enough to come East. You see I wanted to get as far away as possible from Walter. I was in constant fear of meeting him. When I arrived here a year ago, I obtained a position in Brooklyn in a factory as stenographer. Now I ’m the private secretary to the head of the firm and making a very decent salary—very decent for a woman.”

“Have you heard anything of your mother?”

“She is dead. I never saw her again.”

“Your father?”

“Of him I know nothing.”

She sat very quietly, still intent upon her story; her hands were folded in her lap; her lips tremulous. Evening was approaching with a noisy twitter of birds; the shore and the bay were regaining some of their old charm with the softening light. The hard orderly lines of the sodded cliff and the

ugly upheaval of the breakwater melted beneath the golden light of sunset. From afar came the sound of whistles announcing the end of the workers' day.

Nora arose. "It must be getting late," she said, staring out over the undulating water with unseeing eyes.

They walked back along the beach and up the cliff. Before the white house where Nora had lived, they paused. It had fallen into disrepair and needed painting; it had grown strangely smaller with the years.

"Things appear so ridiculously impressive when one is a child," said David.

They waded through the meadows where the sporadic growth of new villas stood deserted in the hush of evening. The hammering and shouting and bustling had ceased for a little while. Night was drawing the torn meadows to her cool bosom. They crossed First Avenue and came upon the orderly rows of small houses set behind their handkerchiefs of grass. The houses now showed lights, and red-globed lamps with beaded fringes shone bravely in small parlors of impeccably varnished woodwork. Past it all stole David and Nora like two shades who had no place in the happy, well ordered commonplace life these little houses represented.

They did not speak except in short detached sentences until they were on the ferryboat again. Then David told Nora of Evelyn. He had intended telling her to-day, but finally when the City was so near, its huge buildings towering over them, he found he had to force himself to it.

"I am going to be married, Nora," he said abruptly.

"Yes," said Nora in a very low voice, and suddenly she lifted her hand to her hat and let her veil fall over her face.

"Yes," he repeated.

After a moment she said, "I'm glad, David. I'm awfully glad. At first I was n't but I think it's probably the best thing. . . . I think you'll be happy. You ought to be. I should think any woman would be happy with you. What's her name?"

"Evelyn Foster."

"Foster?"

"My employer's daughter."

"I should like to see her."

"Yes, you must meet her sometime," he said quickly and a slightly embarrassed pause followed.

When they reached New York, David proposed dining together uptown. But Nora shook her head.

"I know the quietest little place near Washington Square," he urged.

She would not be persuaded. "Good-by, David,"—she held out her hand. "I'll take the subway. I'll leave you here, please."

"But, Nora!" he exclaimed. "You have n't told me where you are living nor when I can see you again!"

"Do you think that it's wise, David?"

"Wise! Oh, what rot, Nora. It is n't as if we still cared for one another or, rather, as if I cared; you never cared."

"No, I never cared," she echoed, in a lifeless voice.

"Then why should n't we see each other occasionally?"

She did not answer for a minute. "I think it is better that we don't, David. Please don't misunderstand me," she put her hand on his arm. "You're a brother to me, a friend, but I think I'm wiser in this. We must take no chances. I must not come into your life again, and especially not at present."

"I don't understand—"

She smiled, but in her eyes there was an expression he could not fathom.

"Grant me one favor, Nora," he said finally, when he saw he could not alter her decision. He

took a card from his pocket, penciled an address on it. "If you should ever need anything—anything I have—if you should want money, sympathy, help, anything a man can offer, anything a friend and a brother can offer, will you promise to call upon me? It will make this parting a lot easier for me. It will make me almost happy to know that if anything goes wrong with you, I 'll learn of it and can help to set it right again."

She took the card and slipped it into her pocket-book. "I promise," she said solemnly.

She gave him her hand and let him hold it for a minute while he gazed at her under the yellow glow of the Subway entrance lights, with a troubled, perplexed questioning in his eyes.

Then she left him.

CHAPTER X

THAT night very late, after he was quite sure John Powell was asleep in his room down the hall, David stole forth from his bed. There was something that would not let him sleep. He went over to his bureau and drew forth from the lowest drawer, where it had long lain hidden, a small white cardboard box. He thought he owed it to Evelyn to destroy the articles it contained. He picked them out one by one—they were pitifully meager—a dented silver thimble that Nora had lost on the beach, the letters she had written him after the first summer, and the small photograph in the brown leather case that showed her as a child standing on the sand—that was all. David examined them carefully, read the letters and gazed long upon the photograph . . . their destruction became impossible.

“What a sentimental ass I am,” he remarked to himself, “but I ’m sure Evelyn would n’t mind.”

So he replaced them in their box within the bureau drawer and crept back to bed. But still sleep did not come . . .

He did not see Evelyn for a week, while over the telephone her voice asked plaintively what kept him away. She even sent him a short note asking him if he were ill, if she had done anything to offend him—and he did not answer it.

He went back to her, finally, very contrite and repentant, telling himself that his marriage to her would solve his problem, silence his memories. And so tender and thoughtful was he in this attitude that he managed to win her consent to an early marriage.

“Are you quite sure, David, that you love me?” she asked, her arms around his neck. “After all, I don’t suppose I can give you very much. I don’t know—sometimes I think I’m not meant for marriage. Some things about it seem to me so—so horrid. Sometimes I even wonder—oh, David, forgive me!—if I love you enough. I’m selfish, utterly selfish. I’ve been spoilt—I realize that. All my life everything has been given me; I’ve been smothered with gifts and pleasures until I think the real *me* has died. But if you left me, if some other woman took you from me, I should be mad with jealousy . . . I care enough for that.”

Never had David found her so charming as in that rare moment of frankness. He thought of what John Powell had said of Evelyn and told

himself that a woman who confessed her weaknesses was a woman indeed.

“Evelyn, I look upon my marriage to you as a safe haven, deep with happiness,” he said—and he believed what he said. “If you refuse to marry me now, God help me.”

And so one day at high noon they were married in Christ Church on Brooklyn Heights with music filling the air and flowers banked high around them, and Evelyn’s friends, brilliantly attired, crowding the church, and the reception at the big Foster home afterwards.

David went through it all in a dazed condition. People’s faces were a blur before his eyes and he dropped the ring as he was about to place it on Evelyn’s finger and remembered groping around on the carpeted floor searching for it in the dim light.

Afterwards only two impressions remained distinct with him.

One was Evelyn descending the stairs as they were about to go away. She wore a traveling suit of light gray which made her seem more radiant even than her white wedding gown; her eyes were shining, her cheeks flushed but, nevertheless, she was wonderfully calm, quite mistress of herself.

The other impression was John Powell, who had at last been prevailed upon to come, wringing

David's hand as he was about to step into the motor, and saying, "Forget what I said, my boy. God give you happiness! I shall miss you, David."

Then the closed automobile moved swiftly and silently away and he was conscious of Evelyn's eyes, a little frightened, upon him. It seemed to him that they were absolutely isolated from the rest of the world, they, two, as if they had each been cast separately upon a desert island and had suddenly come face to face. She had been given to him to protect and cherish through all the rest of her life and his life . . . very tenderly he put his arms around her shoulders and drew her to him and with the kiss he gave her then he felt that one book in his life was closed and a new one opened with blank pages on which he could write what he willed.

PART III

CHAPTER I

DURING the honeymoon, David discovered the tenacity of purpose which ran, like a steel wire stiffening silk, through the frail body of his wife. She was so accustomed to her own way that she could not brook contradictions of any kind, could hardly understand them. They infuriated her, galvanized her into white and speechless anger. This spirit manifested itself at first in many small ways. Evelyn was a Puritan. She had a number of prejudices which were not founded on reason but which had been handed to her intact, by her parents, much as they had handed her bread and butter when she was a child. Certain things were wrong because she had been told they were wrong.

With these fixed beliefs to back up her arguments she laid a hand on some of David's personal habits and with pouting lips and contracted eyebrows said, "I wish you would n't smoke so much, David. It's bad for you—especially cigarettes. Won't you please be moderate for my sake? I'll limit you to a box a day."

She viewed askance his friendly overtures to people they encountered in their travels, in the trains and the hotels, and once when he had accepted a stranger's invitation to have a drink with him she had been so outraged that she refused to speak to him for half a day.

Evelyn demanded, too, a great deal of attention, he found, in small and foolish ways. It angered her curiously to have him slight or forget these demands. One evening, when he had failed to open a door as she was about to pass out of a room, she turned upon him with a cold and unsmiling: "I see I shall have to teach you some of the manners of a gentleman."

The memory of that remark stung for several days although he did his best to forget it . . .

Apart from these trifling discords, however, the friction of one nature adjusting itself to another, their honeymoon was a long and intoxicating duet. Evelyn showed, in her melting moods, that she could be wonderfully soft and tender. In love she was a sweet creature.

But toward the end of the journey David secretly found himself thinking gratefully of its termination. Honeymooning was too rhapsodic. It contained too little of the sterner stuff of life. It was a strange custom, he thought, this honeymooning, which brought two people so irrevocably

face to face, day after day, exposing them to each other so constantly in such a fiercely intimate light. It did, indeed, demand its madness, its glamour. It overdrew so heavily, at the very outset, the fund of common sympathies, interests, and ideas. It was, he concluded, a relic of that time when a bride did not ask so much leniency in a husband nor a groom so much intelligence in a wife. It was somewhat obsolete. It belonged to that simpler period when the wife was the vine and the husband the oak.

David discovered many things about Evelyn toward the close of their travels and each new discovery was utterly surprising. He felt somewhat as if he had started out with some one he knew quite well and was returning with one whom he had met on the way and was only beginning to know. Curtains had been torn away but new and more subtle ones had replaced them.

He found, for instance, that Evelyn did not have any real liking for books or plays. He imagined that she would not feel their loss greatly if through some unimaginable catastrophe they were all done away with. She read books because she heard people talk about them and she went to plays because the theaters drew their audiences. Nor did she have any but a feeble interest in the things that were happening in the world. For a time, he

found great amusement in her method of reading a newspaper and he chaffed her about it until it sent her into a sullen mood. She would pass hastily over those columns which told of the big events of the day and come to anchor before a divorce suit or some other recital of scandal . . . she found, as if by instinct, the queerest little items no matter in what corner of the paper they were tucked so long as they dealt in personalities, tepid and spiced. But her training was such that in discussing it, she would end up by saying with a shake of her little head, "How can people do these awful things?"

She was happiest, he noted, at dinner in the big dining-room of the hotel in Quebec where they stayed for a fortnight. There she commented with avidity on the dresses and manners of the people who sat at other tables. She sparkled with animation, seemed confident of her own charming appearance; her conversation, slightly malicious, very naïve, ran on amusingly. As if her position as a married woman gave her new freedoms, she would lean towards David and whisper, "Do you think that woman over there with black hair is a bad woman? Look how she's fondling that man's hand. A lady would n't do that, would she?"

In the past, before their marriage, she had ignored that type of woman when they had encoun-

tered her in restaurants, had sat with averted eyes and pursed lips. But now it was as if marriage had given her the right to peer, to ask questions, to unveil a hard and relentless curiosity. David could not help thinking of a pretty child suddenly released from a dark closet, standing on its threshold, blinking, disapproving, afraid to come out and yet too interested to go back.

Evelyn did have the gift of dressing well. It was her means of expressing herself. Neither ribbon nor buckle ever struck a discordant note. The color scheme of her attire was worked out as carefully and painstakingly as a designer's. When she spoke of other women's clothes it was with the authoritative air of an artist discussing amateurs. Much of the triumph of the artist, too, was hers as she passed through a crowded room with the eyes of every woman, appraising, wondering, curious, following her.

Such was the Evelyn that David had married. . . .

It was in June that they returned to New York. As they were to spend at least two months that summer with Evelyn's parents in their country home at Woodmere, they decided to postpone all plans for their own homemaking until autumn.

CHAPTER II

WOODMERE lies flat on the south shore of Long Island within easy commuting distance of New York. Where, not so long ago, the wild duck flew croaking over marsh grasses and through clumps of stunted cedars, the villas of the well-to-do now raised their sloping roofs and red brick chimneys, crowding closer together each year.

Down at Woodmere, that summer, people spoke of the fortunate marriage Evelyn Foster had made. David Wells was such a nice young man, so devoted to his wife. The two of them were always together; if David played his indifferent tennis or golf at the country club, his wife always sat on the wide veranda of the club house watching him. It was as such things should be, of course, said everybody, but unfortunately they were so seldom as they should be. It was so refreshing to see an ideal example of a newly married couple. In the quieter young married set down there David and Evelyn quickly found their place. They were welcomed as a thoroughly de-

pendable addition to the ranks of the respectable and law-abiding.

This country life which centered around the club house where the dances were held and where the tennis and golf tournaments took place, was new to David and he found it very delightful. It was so idle and luxurious, so carefree and healthy. It was such a normal and graceful use of wealth. These people never seemed to have a want or desire which they could not immediately gratify and at the same time their wants and desires were all so perfectly natural and becoming. Playing games, swimming, dancing—it was almost childlike in its simplicity. When one was tired there was a deeply cushioned chair waiting in a shady corner; when one was thirsty there was an iced drink to be had for the touch of a bell; when one was hungry there was everything one could wish for brought graciously by sleek and smiling waiters. “This is the real thing!” David told himself. “This is what I have always wanted!” The keys of the City had unlocked another door for him.

Often, at night, Evelyn would come to him and put her hands on his shoulders, saying, “I’m so proud of you, David. Everybody likes you. And you look so well in your summer clothes. You’re really quite decorative, dear—” Then, with an air of confession— “For a time on our honey-

moon, for just a little time, I wondered if we were going to get on together. How silly it was of me. I'm so happy now. If only we could always be as happy as we have been this first summer."

"How ridiculous! What are you afraid of, poor, foolish little thing?"

"Oh, David, we're so happy that somehow it does n't seem right. It seems to me sometimes as if we'll have to pay for this happiness with sorrow."

Then David would put his arms around her (very lovely she looked with her pale gold hair in braids down her back) and pet her into reassurance.

In September, Evelyn aroused herself from the summer's lethargy and developed a violent interest in house hunting. She journeyed to the City nearly every day for a week or two. At last she told David she had found a most attractive apartment on Brooklyn Heights, not far from the big Foster house.

"But I thought we were to live in New York?" protested David.

"New York rents are impossible. Besides, I want to stay near the people I know."

Although David wondered why he had not been consulted in the matter, he decided to say nothing further. He had long since learned that to

cross Evelyn's will was but to provoke a quarrel in which, sooner or later, he was forced to capitulate. One of the reasons for the summer's success was that he had learned that lesson.

Evelyn's feverish activity was resumed after a brief intermission. It was directed now against furnishers, painters, paper-hangers, tradesmen of various sorts. She returned to Woodmere evenings, sometimes later than David himself got back from business. Dark circles of fatigue were beneath her eyes, her voice was plaintive with weariness. She refused all invitations, retired early, and had David read her to sleep while she lay propped up in bed, her thin shoulders buried in pillows, her braided hair a silver rope upon the blue silk of the wrap she wore. "I suppose it 's selfish of me, David," she said, "but, after all, it 's for your sake as well as mine that I 'm working this way."

"Why don't you let me help? Don't you trust my judgment in furniture and carpets?"

"I 've dreamed for years of what my own home shall be like. I don't want any interference from a mere man. I know you 'll be pleased, dear. I 'm not going to let you see a thing until it 's all ready. You have your business. This is mine." And pulling his head over towards her she ran her fingers through his hair, rubbed her smooth cheek

against his, saying in a childish voice which she affected now and then, "Let Evelyn have her way. Be a good boy, David. Little Evelyn's so tired."

Finally, one October morning, according to her instructions, he said farewell to Woodmere and reported that evening at his new home. She even had to tell him how to find it. That seemed a huge joke to them.

Walking smartly down from the Subway, he discovered a shining, white-stone apartment house in Montague Street which corresponded with the number Evelyn had given him. The waters of the bay glimmered not far away and a tree in the yard of an old house next door glowed crimson against the sky. He stepped into an elaborate marble hallway and feeling as if he were a stranger paying a call in an unknown house, was lifted in a small gilt cage to the fourth floor. A smiling maid in a neat black waist and white apron answered his ring.

"Is my wife here?" David asked awkwardly.

She burst out laughing from behind a portière and threw her arms around him. "Isn't it fun, David? And isn't it ridiculous! Now, I'll show you around." She barely gave him time to remove his coat. Hand in hand, they wandered from room to room. He found each furnished ex-

quisitely; his store of appropriate adjectives was soon exhausted. In the living-room there was an open fireplace; green draperies hung at the doors, chrysanthemums in a tall vase stood on a mahogany desk, and old prints in dark wood frames were on the walls. The dining-room held furniture of dull brown oak and curtains of a peculiarly vivid deep blue. Evelyn's bedroom was gay with chintz and pillows, water-colors, photographs, and white furniture. It was not until he came to his own room that the least discord was struck. For at the sight of chintz and white here, too, he frowned.

"Don't you think it's a little overdone for a man's room?" he asked.

Evelyn pouted and dropped his hand. "Of course, I knew you'd find fault with something."

She stood drooping and chilled for a minute or two. "You can have it changed if you wish," she suggested at last.

"No, I suppose I'll get used to it," he said reluctantly, and she bloomed again.

"But I have n't shown you the real jewel of the apartment. I've kept it hidden till the last."

She led him back to the living-room and with the air of a priestess presiding at a rite, pulled a green curtain away from the wall. A painting was revealed.

"It's a real Anton Mauve," she whispered rev-

erentially. "I bought it at auction. Don't ask me what I paid for it."

"But you 've ruined me, Evelyn!" he cried in consternation which was not altogether feigned.

"I 've paid for everything," she said, and waved her hand generously. "Everything out of my own money. That 's my share, David."

"But, Evelyn—"

She covered his lips with her rosy ones. "To what better use could I put my money, dear?"

"I feel like a male Nora in this doll's house," he said later.

But Evelyn did not understand him. "Doll's house!" she echoed. "Well, if you 'd had to pay the bills you would n't call it a doll's house!"

The maid entering discreetly announced dinner and they went into the dull brown and blue room together and sat glowing happily at each other across the silver and crystal.

Gradually into the routine of their quiet evenings at home, evenings devoted to books and the newspaper, perhaps a game of cards or to desultory discussions of the day's incidents, came a slight feeling of unrest. "We 'll have to do some entertaining, I suppose, David," Evelyn said. "What 's the use of having a Mauve if you can't show it to any one? Besides people will be get-

ting back to town. They 'll expect us to do something for them, if only to repay them for their wedding presents." Slipping over to the desk, she began to select names for a dinner party, jotting the favored ones down on a long slip of paper, scratching some out after they were down, substituting others.

"Why not ask John Powell?" asked David, from his chair beside the lamp.

"I don't like him."

"He 's done so much for me, Evelyn. He 's the person I should most of all like to entertain in my own home."

"Some other time, then," she murmured petulantly. "I 'm only going to have people I like at my first dinner party."

The affair turned out very felicitously. Evelyn sat at the head of the table, flushed and triumphant.

"Do you think everybody had a good time?" she asked afterwards. "The soup was too salty, did you notice, David? Did you see how Alice Donaldson pushed it away from her? I hate people like that. But I think it was a success, don't you?"

That first dinner party was the beginning of many. They received invitations in return and, almost before he was aware of it, David found

himself hurrying home every afternoon to dress to go one place or another. A round of meaningless social affairs seemed to get him in its hard grasp.

"We are going to the Perrys' to-night, David," Evelyn would say at breakfast—she made a point of having breakfast with him, attired in a loose silk wrap, yawning, and with a keen appreciation of the sacrifice she was making to her duty as a wife. "If you leave the office a little early, we'll motor down to the Perrys'. The trains to Douglaston are so uncertain. I made arrangements with mother yesterday to use her car."

"But, my dear, I can't leave the office early every day. I'm ashamed to pass John Powell's office. You see if I neglect my share of the work he has to shoulder it."

"Oh, just this time, David. I shan't ask it again."

Even David's Sundays were arranged for. Every Sunday Evelyn and he were compelled to have dinner with the Fosters—a long, tedious dinner of many courses. The climax of the Fosters' Sunday was reached in that dinner. They did not believe in "doing much on Sunday," as they expressed it. After church in the morning the whole day was left idle for them, except for the momentous dinner. It assumed importance of

immense proportions and it dragged its weary length through an interminable succession of dishes.

After dinner they sat, heavily overfed, in the long drawing-room; Mrs. Foster and Evelyn discussed their friends and their dresses, whispers of marriages, of births and deaths floated through the room; Mr. Foster nodded over the Sunday paper; David walked restlessly up and down the room, puffing furiously at one cigar after another—Mrs. Foster approved of cigarettes even less than Evelyn, but cigars, for some reason or other, were not held to be as vicious as cigarettes.

While David paced he thought of the hideous Sundays of his youth, when his mother would not let him go out on the beach to play because it was “wicked” to do so on the Sabbath. “You can play every other day in the week. It’s not proper on Sunday,” he could remember her saying. Her voice seemed to echo through the large drawing-room of the Foster house, with its ornate, silk-covered chairs and damask portières. He thought how ironical it was that, after so many years of freedom, he should feel the chains of this outgrown conventionality once more.

One Sunday he revolted.

“I’m not going to your father’s to-day,” he announced.

Evelyn regarded him incredulously. "Why not?"

He floundered for reasons. "I don't want to go. It's insufferable."

"But what will they think?"

"I don't care what they think. You go and I'll stay home and read."

"But I have n't arranged for dinner, home."

"I'd rather go without dinner than go there."

She made a gesture of helplessness and repeated, "But why?"

"That unnatural formality—those deadly old-fashioned ideas about behaving one way on Sunday and a different way on all other days."

"I understand, my dear," she said appealingly, "but they don't. They're too old to change. We can't change them now and there's no sense in shocking their feelings—they'd be hurt—terribly hurt, that's all."

He sank deeper in the chair as if it were a refuge and resumed his reading. "Well, I'm not going."

"But what will they think?"

"I don't give a damn what they think."

She turned from him, pale and shaken, and went to the telephone. He heard her say: "We shan't be around, David does n't feel well."

Then she returned to sit with him. He looked

up from his book to find her weeping silently. He tried to disregard her and found that his book had lost all interest. He flung it down and jumped to his feet with: "Oh, it 's too bad—too damn bad that such a little thing should upset you so."

She gave him a wet and reproachful glance. "It is n't a little thing to me, David."

He could resist no longer and found her responsive to his caresses. "I suppose I did act like a brute, Evelyn."

She melted into his arms with a babble of incoherent remarks. "They 'd think it so strange if I came alone. They 'd think we 'd quarreled. And if they knew you did n't want to come, David, they 'd feel so hurt. You 'll go next Sunday, won't you?"

In desperation he promised, and found he was caught up in the endless chain again.

It was that way in many things. . . .

CHAPTER III

WHY were n't they happy? What did they demand of each other? There was no answer to the questions except the presence of the questions themselves.

They had been married over a year. Even the second summer, spent like the first in the home of Evelyn's parents at Woodmere, had lost its glamour. The golf, the tennis, the motoring, the idle luxurious life, all were the same; even the people were the same—and yet David was not satisfied. Why? He did not know. It was as idle to question as it is to analyze the weariness that overtakes one on spring days or the sadness that weighs one down when a certain strain of music is sounded.

It was as if the first summer were temperate and sunny, with the green of trees and grass wet with fragrance; as if the second summer were hot and dusty, with every little leaf and blade of grass dried, browned, and withered. One summer's beauty, of course, was as full bosomed as the other's, but it seemed to David as if one held all and the other none.

It was, too, as if their tempers had become parched and dried, grown brittle, suddenly breaking forth into sparks . . .

They returned to Brooklyn earlier that autumn, feeling that possibly in the seclusion of their own home there would not be so much cause for discontent. Mrs. Foster's yearning solicitations and Mr. Foster's clumsy interference had grown intolerable.

But the change brought little surcease.

It was a constant battle between them—Evelyn battling for possession, David for freedom. He felt that Evelyn wanted to possess his every thought and feeling—his every interest. She was actually jealous of his business.

“What does it matter if the business does suffer a little?” she once asked him. “We have plenty of money. There's so much more to life than mere money-grubbing. It's so sordid.”

“But don't you understand, Evelyn? It isn't just the money. It's the fun of the thing—a man's got to do something.”

“Yes, but he has no right to place his business above everything else, including his wife's happiness. Oh, I've heard of such cases and of how they've ended.”

David shrugged his shoulders. “I'm afraid you get too many of your ideas from exaggerated

novels. Look at it this way: I get paid for doing certain work. If I don't do it, it's cheating."

"But you're a member of the firm now. Some day you'll be the head of it. John Powell will have to take his orders from you. He's in back of all this silly conscientiousness of yours. I can see that. Money and work—that's all he knows. He does n't appreciate the finer things."

"What finer things?"

"I can't explain exactly, but going out and seeing people, nice people. Entertaining—broadening oneself—all that." She spread out her hands in an ineffectual gesture.

"If I am not going to do the work, I had better resign."

Evelyn looked up hopefully. "If you resigned we could go abroad for a year or two."

Her calm acceptance of his statement maddened him. He slapped his hand on the table. "I have no intention of resigning. My work's the only thing I have left."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that sometimes I feel as if I were losing my individuality, Evelyn. I'm becoming an automaton. You're robbing me of all incentive, all ambition, by making me so damned comfortable. It is n't good for a man."

She gazed at him bewildered while the tears

gathered in her eyes. "And you blame me for doing that!" she cried.

David felt that he would have liked to weep with her. The pity of it! She could not look at things with his eyes—not for the shortest minute could she see a thing as he saw it! Nor could he take her viewpoint. It was as if they each used a language which the other only partly understood. It was as if, husband and wife, they lived with a heavy veil between them through which neither could see the other clearly.

They had their great battle one October evening about a month after they had returned from the country.

David found Evelyn in the living-room that night. She stood before the fireplace awaiting him, her very attitude one of accusation, of bitter reproach.

"Will you please explain those things?" she said, pointing dramatically to a little litter of articles on the table.

He recognized the silver thimble, the letters, the faded photograph of Nora taken on the beach so long ago. Across the back of his neck he felt a stinging sensation as if some one had struck him.

"Evidently you've been searching through my personal belongings."

"Nothing of the kind!" she threw back at him.

“Babette found them in the lowest drawer of your bureau this morning when she was cleaning and brought them to me.”

“They are nothing more than remembrances of my childhood.”

“Of a love affair?”

“Yes.”

“What business had you to keep them after I became your wife? Don’t think I didn’t have remembrances. I burned bundles of letters. You should have done the same. It was only fair to me.”

“Perhaps it was that I cared for them more than you did for yours,” he said.

She swayed as if he had struck her, then leaped across the room, seized the little group of things from the table and threw them into the open fire. Flame leaped up, a few black scraps fluttered, over a bright coal a little puddle of melted silver formed—and they were gone.

David made no motion to restrain her nor to rescue his possessions. But he felt the heat and the burn across the back of his neck swell and grow, steal around as if a hand were choking him. “You should n’t have done that, Evelyn,” he said quietly.

She made no answer but threw herself on the couch, her body shaking with sobs; presently she

raised her face from her arms to say, "I wish I had the courage to leave you."

Suddenly David felt calmness descending over him; it was as if he viewed this vulgar outbreak from a distance, as if he were another person. He seated himself on the edge of the table and lighted a cigarette. "Perhaps that would be the better way, Evelyn."

She looked up at him, shocked, her eyes round and large in a face red with weeping.

"What do you mean?"

"We have n't made much of a go of it, do you think? There has n't been much sympathy or understanding. Oh, I know I'm as much to blame as you. Neither is to blame, for that matter. It's just that we did n't fit, we two. But if it's a failure, let's acknowledge it. Let's get out of it as best we can." He was conscious that as he went on her incredulity grew with his words. "We're more or less modern. We know marriage is n't the sacred thing it was once supposed to be. It's a partnership. If there are no profits, it's better to break up, put up the shutters, close the shop. The horrible thing is to let it drag on endlessly."

She sat up straight, rigid with horror. "Oh, how awful!" she cried. "How can you say such things! It's sacrilegious! It's immoral! It's putting us on a plane with the animals!"

They gazed at each other with hate—hate that was founded on misunderstanding and fear—chiefly, perhaps, on hopes that were not and never could be realized.

Presently David arose, put on his hat and coat, and went out. He walked on heedlessly but, as if he were animated by a purpose which he did not consciously know, he made for the river front. He walked out on a dock. Below him, beneath the stars, the water gurgled and sucked and whispered to him. It was as if the waters had called to him, as if in his childhood the voice of the waters had impressed itself upon his very soul, and when he was in trouble called to him and offered solace. The waters were to David what the moist brown earth is to some men. . . .

He went back to the apartment late and, undressing stealthily, crept into bed. But he had not been there long when he heard the creak of the door and a faltering footstep. Evelyn stole into bed beside him; her hair hung loose and lustrous over her shadowy white nightdress. She slid her body next to him, put her arms around him, placed her lips against his. Then as if even that did not satisfy her, she took the long strands of her hair and wound them around his neck. . . .

“David, my husband,” she sobbed. “I was so afraid—so afraid you might not come back. I

can't let you go. I have made you a little happy at times, have n't I? I don't care if there were other women before me, but I can't bear the thought of others coming after me . . . taking my place. Forgive me, dear, and kiss me. Kiss me again—again and again.”

CHAPTER IV

EVELYN'S baby was born that winter. David decided that here, at last, was a bond between them. Innumerable storied incidents and scenes came to his mind with a familiar Biblical quotation to point the moral. There was some truth in the worn old sentimentalities after all. A holy and hushed feeling pervaded the house before the birth. . . . David, uplifted, stole around on cushioned feet, consumed with anxiety, filled with vague promises to the future if everything went well. And after the child was born he remembered thinking that he and Evelyn had created a living thing out of their own flesh and blood and that it was perfectly natural it should link them together.

But the presence of the child, while it created a readjustment of the relations between Evelyn and himself, did so in an entirely unexpected manner. After Evelyn had recovered from an illness which proved exceptionally severe, she turned her entire attention to the baby. Something had been put into her arms which gave full scope to her mania for possession. Here was a small being whose life

she could arrange and order to her heart's content; who, in fact, with lusty voice and tiny, doubled-up fists insisted upon the most meticulous notice.

During those first months when the little girl hung barely suspended over the line of life which she had so recently crossed, Evelyn was with her almost every minute. Even at night she yielded her place beside the crib reluctantly to the nurse. David recalled Evelyn during that period constantly bending over the baby, placing her fingers to pressed lips if he entered the room, turning upon him the alarmed oval of a pale face grown slightly hollow beneath the cheek bones, with eyes enlarged with apprehension. She was continuously arranging the child's blankets, smoothing them, standing by to see that the milk was of the proper temperature, always busy, always occupied with one detail or another. David sometimes wondered if her feverish attentions did not retard the child's progress towards well-being.

So, he found before long, with a sense of amazement that the personal freedom for which he had fought had come to him unasked. Evelyn had no time for him. . . .

Like a man in a strange city, like one groping from dark to light, he began to feel his way back to his old life. He sought out former acquaintances

and friends, started to fill in the crevices and gaps which his marriage had so entirely filled and then so abruptly left empty.

One of the first persons he renewed his friendship with, of course, was John Powell. The first night he went up to call on Powell he was fortunate enough to find him at home and alone. David had not been there since his marriage and the sight of the familiar brown room, so comfortable and masculine with its large chairs and heavy table, bare of all irrelevances, nursing in its corners the odor of tobacco, was like a warm bath to a chilled body. He bathed himself in its atmosphere, let it sink into the very pores of his body. As he stood there in this room which had always had its welcome for him, a room with the individuality of a beloved book or a warm and voluminous dressing-gown, he could not help but contrast it with the room he hated—his own room in the apartment, the place of chintz and white paint which had always had the ill grace to remind him that Evelyn, and not he, had bought and paid for its furnishings.

“It ’s so good to see it again, John,” he said to his host, with an apologetic air for his long silence.

The relations between the two men since David’s elevation to membership in the firm had undergone a subtle readjustment; despite the difference in their ages they had easily fallen into the habit of

addressing each other by their first names and it was no longer the employer speaking to his employee but two men of equal standing consulting with reference to each other's opinions.

On this occasion John Powell was very tactful. He made no comments upon David's return, asked no questions. He sat, with his eyes upon the fire, allowing David to saunter around the room from one friendly object to another until he finally settled himself in the chair which in former days had been considered his. Then when he had come to anchor, Powell pushed over the cigars and the flask of whisky with an abrupt, "Help yourself."

Nevertheless, despite the older man's discretion, there was some constraint. Their attitudes, the very positions in which they sat—Powell deep in his chair, his chin on his chest; David, lolling back, one leg thrown over the cushioned arm of his chair—were marvelously like a hundred other evenings when they had sat thus together. And it was in this likeness that the strangeness lay. For almost three years of unknown impulses and interests stood between them. Their eyes brushed occasionally with inquiring glances; John Powell could not altogether conceal his itch to question. What had brought David back? Why? Had Evelyn and he quarreled? He was ready enough to console or advise, even to be silent if that were

better, but he must know something of the nature of the ground over which he must travel to the other's confidence. Ever since David's marriage he had seen him practically every day in the office but his presence in the apartment to-night for the first time in so many months only emphasized the chasm that had opened up between them so far as their personal affairs were concerned.

"I suppose you've been having the same old parties?" David asked.

"Did you expect reformation?"

"Of course not. Same old crowd?"

"Some have dropped out. But we don't miss them, David. Plenty more to take their places."

"The king has but to command, John."

Powell looked his inquiry.

David chuckled. "I sometimes used to imagine you as a ruler, John, demanding his players to come before him and amuse him. Your parties always had that sort of a feudal air."

Then the tension again. It was not until they were fairly started on the subject of business that the discomfort vanished.

"Say, David, I'm thinking of opening a branch in London," Powell said presently. "Competition's awful over there but lots of room for it—the English swill tea. Besides it would be quite a stunt to put it over the English fellows—

carrying the war into the enemy's country. They've been ready enough to come over here, Lipton and the rest of 'em, and try to get our trade with their damn 'His Royal Majesty approves' stuff! What do we care what His Majesty drinks? We can go over there with some real American advertising, like that department store fellow—Selfridge, is n't it?—knock 'em off their feet. How would you like to run over and look over the ground?"

"I don't suppose Evelyn would like me to go without her."

John Powell digested this remark, chewing viciously on his cigar. The remark had thrown light on dark places. So he was not free of Evelyn? She still held him. He gave vent to a touch of bitterness. "Has n't gotten over the idea of holding you fast, eh? I thought the kid might have satisfied her."— As David did not answer, he added: "Oh, well, we'll drop the thought of it for the present. Maybe I'll go myself next spring."

When David arose to go, later, John Powell accompanied him to the door. He placed his hand affectionately on the other's shoulder. "Say, I saw those posters you got up for Maroma. Fine—fine! Best thing you've done in a long time.

We need something new, David. More ginger! It's been pretty hard sledding for me alone. I miss your enthusiasm, my boy—got no one to talk to. Can't you get the habit of running up here nights a couple of times a week? I won't ask too much. Don't want to get Evelyn going so she won't let you come at all. Say, she hates me, doesn't she? I've got her number and she knows it. Well, we won't talk about it. Tip me off when you're coming so I'll be sure to be here."

"Yes, I'll do that."

"Good!" John Powell's face shone. "We'll start growing again—new plans, new ideas—growing and growing. London—Paris, maybe, the whole world!"

They laughed together in a triumph of optimism.

"It is like old times!" said David.

Thereafter he did go up to John Powell's at least once a week. Occasionally, they had dinner together. He savored his new freedom with the keenest relish.

But, fine as it was, there was something missing. One afternoon, musing at his desk, he thought suddenly of Nora. She seemed to come full-bodied from out the background of his thoughts and stand before him. The desire to see her became irresistible.

He did not know where she lived. He had not seen her since the day, shortly before his marriage, when they had gone back to the beach together—that day filled with the sad sweetness of old memories. She had refused him her address (and he could see her standing beneath the yellow glow of the subway lights, shaking her head solemnly and saying, “I ’m wiser in this, David”). But she had told him, he remembered, that she was living in Brooklyn— Not Bay Ridge—“the other end of Brooklyn.”

With some absurd excuse to himself, he started pilgrimages to Williamsburg, Greenpoint, those outlying districts of Brooklyn which had always been an unknown country to him. He explored miles of streets filled with little wooden houses and new tenements, overflowing with aliens, districts where no one seemed very wealthy and no one very poor, where thousands upon thousands of perfectly commonplace people pursued busily a commonplace life which seemed mysterious and strange to him. Into many women’s faces he peered but he never saw Nora. Once he followed a slim, firm-stepping figure for blocks but when the girl paused before the lighted window of a millinery shop, he saw how ridiculous his mistake had been.

Then some weeks after he had abandoned these

trips, one blowy March morning when flags stood rigidly out from flagpoles and the sky was filled with long torn strips of clouds, he found a letter from Nora awaiting him on his desk. *

CHAPTER V

EVELYN awoke at times from her absorption in the baby to demand imperatively that David take her out somewhere.

"I 'll go mad if I stay in the house any longer," she said once. "Take me to dinner and the theater. I don't even know what 's going on. Let 's go to see something that will cheer me up."

In the restaurant, blooming with gay dresses, bubbling with chatter, she seemed to forget her duties. A sparkle came to her eyes, color to her cheeks.

"It 's wrong of me to let myself go so," she reprimanded herself. "If Ruth were only stronger. Do you think this dress looks all right, David? It 's fearfully old fashioned."

"You 're the prettiest woman in the room," David assured her.

She did indeed look lovely in the dress, whose black lines cut vertically at the throat revealed the whiteness of her bosom and arms. Her hair was wound carelessly around her small head and little tendrils escaped and glinted like polished silver in the light.

David was very happy to be out with her. Now that she demanded so little of his time, he was perfectly willing to give her more than she asked. It was somewhat like their dinners together before they had been married, and the thought came to him that if they had never been married they might have always remained good friends.

She detected the smile on his lips and questioned him. He spoke of his thoughts reluctantly.

"Why, we 're good friends now, aren't we?" she asked, and she let her hand rest on his for a minute. "We 've given up asking too much of each other. I, for one, am perfectly contented with things as they are."

"Don't you ever feel the lack of something?" he asked after a minute.

A little frown appeared between her eyebrows. "Yes, I do, sometimes," she admitted. "But then Ruth cries for me—and I forget everything else. It was awfully kind of Providence to give me a child, David."

"Yes, it was awfully kind," he agreed thoughtfully.

CHAPTER VI

NORA'S writing was unfamiliar to David and he tore her letter open carelessly, but his interest soon quickened and came to attention as he read:

Dear David:

I must see you. I need your advice. Will you meet me on the Sixth Avenue "L" Station at 28th Street, uptown side, any evening this week? Let me know.

NORA DAVENPORT.

There followed a Brooklyn address—the "other end of Brooklyn" address.

David, of course, sent his answer flying without delay. He named the following evening at eight. . . . An impatient day crept by, a long night, another day. . . .

He hurried through his dinner that evening with Evelyn's eyes following the swift movements of his knife and fork, the hurried dismissal of one plate after another.

"You have an engagement?" she asked.

He nodded.

“I had hoped you would walk around to my mother’s with me. Her rheumatism is troubling her, and I said I ’d run around.”

“I ’m sorry. You ’ll have to ask one of the maids to act as your escort.” (The Fosters did not consider it proper for a lady to be alone in the streets after nightfall.)

“I suppose you ’re going up to see John Powell again?”

“No—not to-night.”

She did not question him further. She had become accustomed to his wanderings, almost indifferent to them.

When he stepped out into Montague Street a few minutes later, he found it raining. The March night, however, was mild and melancholy. He hurried up to the Subway. Fast as the train glided through its tunnel, it did not run fast enough for his anxiety. At Brooklyn Bridge he jumped out, ran up the steps, jostling those who descended, and plunged into a taxicab. The swift swaying of the car as it bumped over the cobbles soothed his unrest, answered some need within him for the violence of haste.

He arrived at the Twenty-eighth Street Elevated Station at quarter to eight. Fifteen long minutes to wait. The rain had turned into a drizzle which blew like a wet cloud into his face, and the air had

become chilled. David buttoned his coat to his ears and paced up and down the platform. He stopped and leaned over the railing, gazing down into the street. Sixth Avenue was disfigured with one of the inevitable upheavals which are tribute to the City's growth; around red lanterns that hung on poles a little knot of men labored and dug and carried beams and ropes hither and thither.

The fine rain drifted irritatingly like spray blown from the sea. There was no avoiding it. He moved back to the roofed section of the platform but even here the wet followed, and he hoped Nora would wear sensible clothes while he reproached himself for not fetching an umbrella.

Just before eight he saw her step out on the platform and gaze expectantly up and down its length. He hurried forward, a huge excitement filling him. With outstretched hands they met.

It was so good to see her again. The joy of the encounter flooded him, left him speechless. And how well she looked! He remembered that the last time he had seen her, she had seemed like a spirit harassed, as if something had crushed the fine and valiant essence of her, as if life had done its best to beat her into submission. But that seeming was gone now! She stood before him, confident and fearless; only her eyes were warm and moist with their greeting. She had dismissed the doubts

and sorrows. What a brave figure she was, after all, trim with clean-cut outlines, her hair coiled and bound in a shining knot at the back of her head—dark and lustrous, smooth as the wings of a bird.

At last she spoke. "How good it is of you to come, David."

"How glad I was to come."

"I'm up against a problem. Will you help me?"

He nodded his eagerness.

She threw her quiet, sure glance around the station; a bevy of people waited for trains; no sooner were they carried away by one train than others took their places, standing patiently in groups waiting to continue their journeyings.

"Let's go down and walk around. I can't talk here," she said.

"What about the rain? You've no umbrella nor have I. I can buy one. Or shall we go into some restaurant, find a quiet corner, and talk there?"

"No. I'd rather be outside to-night. It's so good to be out. This coat of mine is rainproofed and—" she extended a hand, palm up to the heavens—"it's little more than mist. But what about you? Are you all right?"

"Of course," he laughed.

They descended to the street and walked up

Sixth Avenue. The rain transformed New York into a fairyland. The yellow and white lights quivered in long reflections on the pavements glittering with wet. It had become a city of shining jade set with strips of silver, red, blue, and yellow—especially yellow—yellow that danced and sang with intensity. The elevated railroad structure overhead was an arch of mysterious and incredible delicacy, fine spun, its heavy steel beams and girders transformed into intricate lacy designs; the automobiles and taxicabs were monsters plunging with glaring eyes out of one bed of mist into another; over the roofs of the buildings floated a pink and sparkling cloud of haze like the light of Roman fire.

“Is n’t it wonderful on a night like this?” said Nora with a long breath. “I don’t often get the chance to see it.”

She walked beside David, matching his long strides with her own, her head and shoulders thrown back, asking no favors. The collar of her tweed raincoat was turned up around her neck; her hands were buried in her pockets; her small brown felt hat sporting a white cockade fitted closely over her head, allowing but a few dark strands of hair to escape and curl in the dampness. She could almost have been mistaken for a slim boy.

Until they were beyond Herald Square, they

walked in silence. But when after crossing Broadway, the street quieted and their path was less obstructed, they fell into easy conversation. At Fortieth Street, they swung to the right and walked several times around those two square blocks which hold the Public Library and the little park to the west of it. Meanwhile they attacked the problem which had brought Nora back to David and their talk harmonized with their swift progress around and around the square.

“You remember I told you about the man who was in love with me—until he found I was living with Walter?”

“The Westerner?”

“Yes—Carl Ellis.”

“Well?”

“I told you I had written him when I first came East, telling him what I had done. I never heard from him until recently. He wrote me telling me frankly that he had gone home intending to forget me. He tried to. For years he’s been working—working like hell he wrote—trying to put me out of his mind. A short while ago his mother died. That removed a great obstacle—and left him with a terrible loneliness. He says that he has never cared for many women—that I’m the only one who has ever claimed him body and soul. He can’t forget me. He’s fought it all out with himself.

He 's overcome his prejudices—'foolish' he called them. He wants to see me again. He wants—to marry me."

"And you?"

Nora came to a stop. She threw out her hands. "What am I to do, David?"

"You care for him?"

"I hardly feel I know him. I liked him immensely. I respect him, and admire him. I think he 's a big man—really big. But love him—no!"

"He might make you happy."

"Happy?"—she shrugged her shoulders—"It 's a meaningless word. Content—perhaps that, more than that—useful! That 's the bait he offers me. He says there 's work for me to do out there in his town. He himself has been doing all sorts of reform work lately—that was part of his program of forgetting. Now he wants me to come out and join forces with him. He 's started a trade school for boys—teaches them useful things—takes them out of the street and turns them into artisans, skilled, proud of their work. He says I can do the same thing with the girls. Fit them out for the battle. How did he know that would appeal to me so tremendously, David; appeal to me more than anything else?"

"I begin to respect him, too," said David soberly, and he thought with bitterness of his own

aimless life, which, it seemed to him now, had been spent in escaping from one futility to another.

"Think of the blessedness of preparing those poor little girls for life, instructing them, helping them to grow up wise and beautiful, equipped to make a decent living for themselves or to become mothers of a finer, nobler race. Oh, I know I'm idealizing it, exaggerating the possibilities. But Carl, you know, has the money—loads of money. It would be such a worth while mission!"

"The thought of your own untrained youth goads you on?"

"Yes, it does. It would be my revenge on things for making me face my destiny so unprepared. Where I was cheated I would see that a hundred went forth equipped."

They strode half a block without speaking. Presently David came forth with:

"I don't see what's holding you back, Nora."

"The price. Marriage with a man I don't love. I've seen what the horrors of that are, remember, although I was n't married."

"You can't compare this man and Walter Bradford."

"No, but under certain conditions you can come to hate a good man as passionately as a bad one."

"Is love necessary? I've often wondered if it's nothing more than a myth—an ideal."

She gave him a swift glance. "Have you always thought that?"

"No, not always," he admitted grimly, after a minute.

"But I was not talking of the conventional idea of love," she explained quickly and a little impatiently. "But something is demanded. The woman must be ready to surrender. I'm not. I can't bear the thought of it."

"Why won't he offer you that work—the work that tempts you so—without marriage? He's big enough. You make him seem as if he were. Why couldn't you go out there and work with him—'join forces' as he said—without marrying him?"

She smiled sadly. "You don't know him. He'd make me that offer readily. For he knows that if I come out there, sooner or later, I'll marry him."

"Why?"

"His power—his, what some people call, 'magnetism.'"

"But in that case, he'd have won you to the point of surrender. The repugnance would be gone."

She frowned thoughtfully. After a while she said, "Yes."—and again, "Yes."

They were rounding the square for the third or fourth time. Over Broadway hung a million

lights; circles and splashes and splintered streaks of light were painted on the wet pavements. David suddenly realized how much he had enjoyed this walk with Nora. It would go down in history among the memorable hours he had spent with her and he thought of his life as a book in which there were certain pages illuminated as the monks used to illuminate their manuscripts, and these pages were the days he had spent with Nora. And now soon she would be gone—gone forever—no more pages of illumination but the dead routine of black and white, black and white. . . .

He turned to let his eyes drink their fill of her while they could, and he saw a slight tremor shake her.

“Are you cold?” he asked brusklly.

She gave him her hand for answer. He found it icy. At once, his imaginings and his fancies vanished; gone was the glory of the jade and gold night.

“Why did n’t you tell me?” he demanded angrily and as the doorway of the Beaux Arts Café loomed in sight, “Let’s go in here. We’ll get something hot to drink.”

“Is n’t it too late?” she hesitated. “I have a long journey ahead of me.”

“I’ll send you home in a taxi.”

They passed through a revolving door, de-

scended a shallow flight of steps and a brilliantly lighted, noisy, crowded room burst upon them. The whiteness of many cloth-covered tables dazzled them, the glitter of glasses and carafes, the sheen of silken dresses and the bare arms and shoulders of women dotted here and there with the intense black and white of men's attire . . . and, as they stepped into the room, the orchestra set up a violent and hilarious strumming and a dozen couples whirled around a square patch of cleared floor in the center of the room, locked and swaying in the mazes of the dance.

"I look so rain-soaked and shoddy," whispered Nora, but David took her arm and led her to a small table in a far corner. Presently amber cocktails, steaming coffee and mushrooms, brown and creamy, clasped tightly within small earthen dishes were brought to them.

Over her cup, Nora's eyes scrutinized the dancers. "It's all new to me," she said.

"Have you buried yourself to such an extent as that?"

"Recovering from my wounds. And working—working hard."

"You're still in the same place?"

"Yes. I've really become quite important over there. 'Executive assistant,' they call me. It's a factory, you know. They manufacture coats for

women. And they seem to think I have good judgment regarding fabrics and styles. Picture me a successful business woman!"

"You like your work?"

"Immensely. At first I only took it seriously in order to forget myself but now I take it seriously because I can't help myself. It has a hold on me."

"Then why, Nora, are you so anxious to enter this new work that Ellis offers you?"

"Because when I look into the future I see blackness—nothing else."

The waiter solicitously withdrew the earthen dishes robbed of their treasures and replaced them with squares of pastry of a flaky tenderness and Benedictine, shining like burnt gold in its tiny glasses.

"How selfish I've been!" cried Nora. "I've drowned you in my sorrows. Of yourself I've asked not a word. Are you happy?"

David's face told her more than he would permit himself to utter. As if she divined his thoughts, she impulsively leaned forward and placed her hand upon his.

"It's not quite all right then?"

"Not quite."

"You'd rather not tell me?"

"I don't think it's quite fair to Evelyn, do you?"

“No—perhaps not.”

He did tell her of his daughter, however, and something of his business and the success that had come to him.

Afterwards he asked, “Have you come to any decision about going West, Nora?”

“I shall write Carl he may come East and see me. Then—perhaps I may go back with him—on my own terms.”

A sadness fell over them at that for they were both thinking that if Nora went back with Carl Ellis it would definitely end their meetings, rare as those meetings had been. But neither spoke of their thoughts, and presently Nora slipped her arms into her coat and David called for the waiter and settled his bill to that gentleman’s smiling satisfaction.

Outside, beneath the portico, David handed Nora into a taxicab, gave the chauffeur his directions, paid him, and turned to say good night.

Very humbly he asked, “May I see you soon again?”

Nora looked at him with a sudden pity. She seemed to see all at once that his was no longer the romantic figure of youth; his hair had thinned a little, the temples were bared, he was stouter, heavier, as if his body had lost its fire, was settling down into the solidity of middle age. But more

than in the physical aspect of him, she was struck by the pathos in his voice. It was no longer the young voice which demands; it was the older voice which entreats. Meltingly, she leaned forward and gave him the warmth of her sympathy.

“Come and see me soon. You have my address. Good night, dear friend.”

CHAPTER VII

TWO nights later David traveled by trolley northeast over vast stretches of Brooklyn, past endless low houses and apartments, little shops set in rows like lighted cells, past dark streets with lines of trees running down their sides, streets which at half-past eight seemed to have closed their shutters for the night and gone to bed, past a noisome area of gas tanks and warehouses.

Presently he reached the unknown Scott Street in which Nora lived and he alighted from the trolley. Two blocks east, ran Nora's instructions. . . . He found a dwarfed apartment house, smug in its newness, lifting its spick-and-span brick walls beside the garden of an old frame house. There was no elevator, but he was greeted in the entrance hall by a card bearing Nora's name tucked over a shining brass bell which he pushed. The door clicked. He entered and ascended to the top floor. There Nora awaited him framed within the oblong of her own doorway.

Her glance was a trifle shy as she took his hat

and coat, but there was no lack of warmth in her cordial, "Hello, David. Doesn't it seem funny and nice to have you calling on me in my own home?"

He followed her into a small sitting-room. There, at once, he saw how she had impressed her personality upon the impeccable stolidity of the room, how she had fought and vanquished its uncompromising walls, its white mantel with the pseudo fireplace; its cold parterre floor. Flowers had given valiant aid. In tall vases and low bowls they stood everywhere. And along the window sill was a line of blooming plants and spreading ferns. Warm rugs softened the floor, shaded lights defied the walls, and curtains of a gaudy Russian design successfully outraged the builder's dream of a perfect gentility. Best of all, the side window gave a glimpse of the garden of the old house with the black branches of a pine tree whispering in the wind, so close to the window that it claimed kinship with the plants within the room.

"So this is your hiding place," David said. "It's quite charming."

They settled themselves in cushioned wicker chairs and presently Nora came smiling with a coffee percolator and brandy, an electric toaster, and a jar of anchovy paste.

"You'll have to help, David," and she set him

to work buttering toast while she tested the coffee with a knowing air and spread anchovy over the toast he had buttered. All the while the percolator bubbled, its fat little body gone mad with glee.

As if by agreement neither of them spoke of the things which lay with warm fingers next their hearts. These topics with which their emotions were inextricably entangled they left severely alone. Yet all the while these unspoken things trembled between them. Their conversation was like one held over a telephone in fear of eavesdroppers. But they found satisfaction in their guarded words. Freely and gladly they talked of books and plays, of customs and conventions. And it was wonderful to them to find in how many things they agreed; every once in a while they had the comfortable intimacy of feeling they walked hand in hand through many questionings and perplexities.

While Nora told of the plays she had seen, of the meetings she had attended—suffrage meetings, meetings where the wrongs of labor had found voice, where freedom from one oppressor or another had been demanded,—David gazed at her admiringly, drinking in the vivid stream of her interests, trying to match them with his own, eager to let her know he sympathized and understood. At

last he said reproachfully, "Here, I 've been thinking of you as a hermit, Nora, shut off from the world, and all the while you 've been gadding endlessly, seeing and hearing and thinking a thousand things of which I 've barely known. All the while your life has been so much richer in experience than mine."

"Oh, I run over to New York whenever there 's anything special," she confessed gaily. "The Irish Players, and whenever Mr. Shaw comes to town, and once in a while—don't laugh, David!—a Casino musical comedy or a Winter Garden show. I 've heard Mrs. Pankhurst speak, and I saw the Paterson Strike Pageant. I 've been down on the East Side to an I. W. W. meeting and up on the West Side to many a fashionable Suffrage Tea, and, as you say, I 've given myself lots to see and hear and think about . . . and it 's all been interesting—tremendously interesting."

So they chatted while the last vestige of toast, the last drop of coffee, disappeared.

"My dear, you 'd better go," said Nora at half-past ten.

David disobediently lighted another cigarette. "I 'm too happy to go."

Nora shook her head at him. "Then I shall make believe, as we used to long ago. You may only come and visit the princess as long as you

obey her slightest wish. When you disobey, the spell is ended—and the door swings closed forever.”

“Is that make-believe?”

“Not altogether.”

“Very well.” He sighed and arose.

But he had a question to ask which would not let him go, and yet which he found painfully difficult to utter. He paced the room once or twice, examining with unseeing eyes, a print or two. Finally he swung around:

“Nora, have you written him?”

Her face at once reflected the somber tone of his.

“Yes. Last night.”

“When is he coming?”

“I don’t know.”

He took a stride forward. “I am going to ask you a great favor. You will go out there, I know. Can’t I see you often—very often—in the time that’s left us?”

Her hands fell passively before her. She sat deep in silence. Presently she gave him a long and intense scrutiny, her eyes raised to his. Then she asked: “Is it fair to your wife? Is it fair to Carl? Is it fair to us, David?”

“What does it matter?” There was desperation in the way he threw that question at her—the desperation of a man who is asked to argue

when he sees the raft floating away from him and the numbing waters creeping over him.

“Is it wise, David?”

“Can’t we be done with wisdom for a little?” he cried hotly. “It’s only asking for a tiny measure of folly, Nora. Of course, if you are afraid . . .”

She sprang to her feet. “I’m not afraid.”

“Then why—?”

She shook her head, calm again. “Oh, it is folly, David, deepest folly!” Then, after another long searching look: “Do you wish it very much?”

“Oh, very much, my dear.”

She threw her arms wide. “Very well! See me every day—every hour that we can manage to have together. As if I were condemned to sobriety all the rest of my life, let me drink deep. I’ve thirsted long enough.” Impulsively she slipped her hand into his. “Does that satisfy you?”

Ten days they had together before Carl Ellis came East to claim his Nora. Ten evenings they had dinner together, sat next to each other at the theater, shoulder warm against shoulder, rode home together in a taxicab over the wide sweep of the bridge with the arch of an illimitable velvet sky stretching overhead, two tiny atoms rushing along

with the swaying of the car, fingers touching fingers sometimes, only to be withdrawn quickly, furtively and wretchedly as if fire had touched fire—two tiny beings ecstatic with pain and glory and a happiness that was half despair, beneath a vault of heaven so lofty and remote that David wondered sometimes whether it mattered (so small they seemed), what emotions possessed them and tore at them or whither those emotions carried them.

CHAPTER VIII

THE miracle was that David's life apart from Nora went on as smoothly as if she were not a passionate intruder upon his existence. He found rest in the monotonous round of his everyday duties and habits. They were like the hours of sleep in contrast with hours of a feverish activity. The ordinary reality of his days became the unreality. He moved through it with the incredible swiftness with which one travels through the blurred episodes of a dream. Each morning he had his rolls and coffee with Evelyn, kissed her good-by, journeyed to the office with a crowd of other shadows engrossed in their newspapers, read letters and answered them, talked over plans with John Powell—a John Powell who scrutinized him a little closely these days with anxious eyes—saw various men, printers, representatives of advertising agencies, of magazines, of newspapers. Then after the routine of healing commonplaces came the enchanted nights again . . .

But one morning, the unreality stabbed through the reality, claimed its place there, swept aside the curtains, and asserted its presence.

It was at breakfast with Evelyn. He became aware of her voice demanding his attention.

“You ’ll be out again to-night?”

“Yes.”

She leaned forward so that her bosom, grown round and full since the child’s birth, rested on the table’s edge. One hand as if guiding her, lay flat on the cloth, palm down, extended toward him.

“It ’s every night now. Is it a woman?”

He hesitated, perceived that it was useless to answer anything but “Yes.”

She drew herself together harshly, shuddered, her hands, clutching, covered her face. Presently she withdrew them and showed dry eyes and drawn lips. “It hurts, David.”

For a moment, confession ran to his lips, but he found he could no more talk to Evelyn of Nora than he could talk to Nora of Evelyn. His jaws closed over his expostulations. But this much he admitted through guarded lips, “It will soon be over. She will soon be gone out of my life forever.”

“What do you mean?”

“She is going West to be married. Meanwhile she permits me to see her—out of pity for me.”

She weighed his words, seeming to twist and turn them, searching for the truth in them as one

sifts a handful of sand in search of a lost jewel. "Pity for you—oh!" she exclaimed at last, and convulsively she choked a sob. Again she leaned towards him, hand extended, her eyes bright and hard with intuition. "Is it that one whose picture I burned?"

"Yes."

"You 've always cared for her!" she broke out passionately. "Always!—more than you 've ever cared for me!"

David finished his coffee, laid down his napkin. Arising, he stood awkwardly indecisive. He was sorry for Evelyn. Yet it was so difficult to show her he was sorry. For the one thing that would comfort her he could not offer—could not even pretend to offer. Presently he forced himself to her side. Beneath the hand he placed gently on her shoulder he felt the flesh quiver, but she did not attempt to avoid the contact. "I 'm terribly sorry, Evelyn," he said.

She turned to him beseechingly and her eyes now were pools of trembling tears. "Why have I failed so utterly? I 've given you everything—everything! I did not know how to give more. Perhaps if you had taught me—?"

Her question was unanswerable and, once more, he saw the walls of misunderstanding between

them. He withdrew his hand and walked over to the window. From there he went back to his seat at the table and dropped into it.

"Don't you think you would be happier if you were free, Evelyn? If you could make your life ever—repair this blundering? You can be free, if you wish, you know."

She gazed at him bewildered as if he were offering her a flask containing some vital fluid which she did not know how to open.

"You alone can get the divorce," he supplemented.

Her face was bitter with disappointment. She shook her head slowly. "Oh, that sort of freedom! If only it were freedom!"

She sat staring dazedly before her, her eyes fixed, as if death had first terrified her and then turned her cold and inanimate.

So he left her. But this time she was not to be dismissed so easily from his thoughts.

CHAPTER IX

THE taxicab jolted to a stop before the door of the dwarfed red brick apartment house and David leaped out to extend a hand to Nora.

But instead of saying "good night," and leaving a cool hand in his for a moment, she murmured, "Come upstairs a minute, will you? I want to tell you something."

So they left the taxicab mumbling below and silently climbed the stairs to the top floor. Nora, removing her coat as she walked, preceded David into the sitting room and switched on the shaded lights, while David followed, every nerve alert with questioning. He saw that her eyes were slightly wider than usual and beneath a matter-of-fact manner which was obviously manufactured, her movements were restless and agitated.

Presently, after setting an ornament aright on the mantel and brushing a speck of dust from the table, she faced him with, "He 's coming to-morrow, David!"

"Carl Ellis?"

"Yes."

He said nothing but sat down heavily in one of the wicker chairs. Something in his face hurried Nora on to explain more gently, "I did not want to tell you until I had to. I was trying to tell you all the way home in the taxi but I could n't. I did n't want to spoil our last night together until its very end."

"Our last night together!" he echoed hopelessly and then in a different tone: "But why our last night? You're not going back with him right away?"

"No, but I shall follow him in a few days—and those few days will be very busy, my dear, packing, arranging things at the office"—then with an impulsive gesture— "Oh, what's the use of pretending, David. After I have promised Carl to go with him, I shan't dare to see you any more."

He leaned forward, his voice dark and thick with emotion, "Not dare? Why?"

She gave him no answer to that. Instead, after an eventful pause she said irrelevantly, "There are cigarettes and Scotch on the table. Help yourself if you will."

He arose and poured himself a little whisky and was amazed to see how his hand trembled as the golden fluid spilled into the glass. "Will you have some?" he asked.

"No, but light me a cigarette."

He drank the whisky first and the fiery liquid steadied him.

She took the cigarette from him and, after a puff or two, forgot it, let it burn itself into a long thin silver ash that dropped unheeded to the floor.

"I should like you to meet Carl, David."

He shook his head, "No!"

"Why not?"

"Isn't that asking a little too much of me? Much as I like the man I could not help betraying how much I hated him."

She went to the window where the pine tree spread its somber branches against the sky. When she turned it was with a rebellious air. "Is it asking more of you than it is of myself?"

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, let's be done with hypocrisy for one night, David. Don't you know I love you?"

A very fever of denial shook him. "Love me!" he cried. "Me! You've never loved me, Nora. You've never given me the slightest hope—not since we were children together. I've always loved you—yes!"—his eyes swept over the past—"Yes, it's always been you—even when you were but a memory to me. But now you come with this wild tale of loving me when we have each finished

patterning our lives so that the other is left out of the weaving."

She laughed and laughing, moved from the window and settled down on the couch with a vivid red and yellow pillow in back of her dark head—that dear head over whose crown the lustrous hair was arranged as smoothly as a bird's wings. She lifted the cigarette to her lips, found it wasted, crossed quickly over to the table, and lighted a fresh one. Calmly she sat down again, utterly quiet she was except for that quick movement of her hand to her lips with the smoke a gray cloud slowly spreading over her head.

Suddenly she dropped the cigarette to the floor, stamped a foot upon it, and leaned forward, her hands clasping her knee.

"It was in Chicago that I first realized I loved you. It was there, during those horrible beastly days, that I came to realize it."

"But why did n't you let me know?"

"How could I let you know? I was a prisoner. When I had freed myself and came back to New York it was you I wanted to see. David, I told you otherwise but to-night we shall tell the truth to each other and nothing else. I went back to Bay Ridge looking for you but could not find a trace of you. When we did meet by accident that day, what did I find? Oh, I was very cautious. I

did not want to betray myself until I found out how it was with you. And what I did find was that you were to be married."

"But why did n't you give me a chance? Why did n't you give me an inkling of how you felt?" he asked with a gesture of appeal.

"I had already done enough harm to your life, my dear. I swore to myself that I should do no more. I saw, the day we went back to the beach together—that I might win you back but I should have despised myself for doing so. You were happy, I thought, you had made a success of your life. You were insuring that success by marriage. Should I interfere? No, it was too contemptible a thing, David, even for me to do."

"But why are you telling me this now?"

"Why? Because now you are placed out of my reach and I am out of yours. As you say we have each finished patterning our lives with the other left out of the weaving. But I 've told you, David, because I could not help telling you. It was desperation and it was weakness but I could not help it."

She still sat very quiet, hands folded together, and suddenly he found that he must be nearer to her. He sprang from his seat and sat on the couch beside her, seizing her listless hands within his.

"Is n't there some way out for us, Nora?" he cried.

She smiled at him bravely. "No."

"If I should get a divorce?"

"Do you think I'd let you do that? Do you think I could take you away from your wife when I would not do that before she was your wife?"

"But you know I'm not happy—not even making her happy."

"It is n't only that, David. There are all sorts of other things to reckon with. There's your business, your child, your friends—oh, I've learned my lesson too well, David, to think I could rob a man of everything and get much happiness out of the theft."

He released her hands. "And you call that love."

"I call that more than love—love with understanding."

He arose to go but found that he could not go. Invisible forces pulled him to her. Abruptly the emotion which had been pent up within him all evening, that had gathered force night after night for days past, broke its barriers and overflowed. "Oh, Nora, I feel that it is all wrong!" he cried. "You love me and I love you—I've always loved you. Everything else is shadow, unreality.

Nothing else matters. There must be some way out."

She shook her head sadly. Rising she came over to him, very tall and radiant, very slim. She put her hands on his shoulders and leaning forward, kissed him. But there was no rapture in that kiss, only the sadness of renunciation. "Now go, my dear," she said, and with a choking, broken little laugh, "your taxicab bill will be enormous."

CHAPTER X

THREE days later he had a note from her. "It 's all arranged," she wrote him. "I followed your plan quite closely. He is going back Wednesday and I 'm to follow Sunday. He 's to let me take up the work and he 's not to speak of marriage for three months at least. Poor thing, he was so heartbroken! He had expected to rush me off my feet, carry me back as his bride with a trip to Bermuda for our honeymooning. He had actually bought the tickets for the trip, flourished them despairingly before me. That shows the assurance of the man. I 'm not a bit disappointed in him, David. Memory did not gild him in the least. He is fine. Really a big man. You should hear him talk about his Trade School. One has to go to the West for real enthusiasm. You 'd like him, David. Honestly, I think you would."

There followed a brief white gap in the note and when the writing began again it was less firm and clear. David had to puzzle over words. "You mustn't try to see me. This is hard to write but I don't feel that I could stand it. Please don't try—please don't."

To that appeal David despatched a wild and incoherent answer and two days later he had another note. "I 've just emerged from a breathless spell of packing to send you this message. With my love, David. What a lot of things one gathers around in a few years of housekeeping. I've some nice things. I've a blue Chinese bowl and a Japanese print and two battered candlesticks I'm going to leave behind for you. My chiefest treasures, these. They have a little corner to themselves in which they sit so proudly, aloof in the mess of debris. Every time I pass them I say to them, 'You are for David, my dear David, and you are always and forever to remind him of his Nora.' "

That letter ended up with a blotched postscript which brought the tears to David's eyes. "I've tried to keep things out of this note but they would n't be kept out. No, you must not see me, David. If you love me, don't try to see me. I'm fighting—and this sort of a fight it is much better to wage alone. It is hard, my dearest one—oh, it is hard. Damn things anyway, damn them and damn them, and damn them! Now, I do feel better."

David, counting each day on the calendar as the condemned man in his cell marks off each day from the days that are left him, realized presently that

it was Saturday—Nora's last day but one in New York.

That afternoon, however, there was another note—very brief, this one. “I find I must see you before I go. I am taking the 7:55 train to-morrow evening—Pennsylvania Station. I shall be there a half hour before train time. Come if you will. We can't be very emotional in the Pennsylvania Station, can we?”

CHAPTER XI

THIS, then, was her last night! To-morrow evening—at 7:55—she would be gone.

David found himself tossed restlessly around his apartment. He sat for awhile at the other side of the library table from Evelyn, who was sticking a needle in and out of white material stretched taut upon a round wooden frame. Her placidity irritated him. He threw aside the evening paper, picked up a magazine, ran over its stupid articles on the reformation of a crook, digging the Panama Canal, on aéronautics, its fluffy tales of young men and women living in an impossibly simple and happy world.

He walked back to the dark dining-room and stood looking out of the window into a gray and shadowy courtyard. There he surprised himself estimating what money he had of his own to be called upon in case of emergency and discovering himself doing this, he laughed grimly at the forlorn hopes which prompted it.

The apartment became too small for him and he let himself out the front door, conscious of

Evelyn's eyes following him, placid no longer but dumb with an appealing entreaty and questioning.

Outside the large freedom of the night welcomed him. . . . His feet moving swiftly, irrevocably, one after the other, carried him to the trolley line—the same trolley line over which one night, not long ago, he had traversed endless areas of the City. Uncontrollable forces had their way with him; when a car came along he swung himself upon it. "What am I about?" he asked himself, in a stupor that was helplessness.

Little stores like lighted cells, empty streets, tree-guarded, close-shuttered, huge round gas tanks spreading their sickly sweet poisonous odors—he was swept swiftly by all these. At the remembered corner he jumped off.

The old garden next to the spick-and-span apartment house had arrayed itself in some tentative garments of spring. The familiar perfume of syringa bush and strawberry shrubs came to him through the paneled fence. He reached the door of the house with poignant memories of childhood aroused by these homely perfumes crowding upon him. Looking up, he saw a light shining forth from Nora's sitting-room windows . . . and as he looked, as if she had leaned out and held up an arresting hand, the impetus which had carried him thus far, deserted him. He sat down as one over-

come with weariness upon the stone steps. And a picture came to him of that room upstairs with its flowers in round red pots along the window sills, the curtains of Russian design, and the wicker chairs in which they had sat opposite each other. He could see Nora moving around, preparing the feast they had shared the first night he had visited her. How deftly she moved, how smoothly with a tiny welcoming smile hovering around her lips. Then suddenly his vision of her changed; she became a trembling, frightened Nora, and he remembered her words, "If you love me, don't try to see me."

Into the cup of his hands, his head fell, and his legs quivered with weakness as if he had run breathlessly for miles. A passerby eyed him curiously, steering her feet into a semicircle to avoid him. A little boy, running along sucking at a candy on a thin stick, came to a sudden halt before him but at a little distance, and gazed at him with hope and expectancy. But as David did not move he hopped away, disappointed, turning occasionally to peer back at him. Presently David lifted himself and stumbled away. The lights of a saloon shining garishly on a far corner beckoned him. He entered through a swinging door and drank whisky—two, three, four glasses—he did not know how many.

Making for the door again, the bartender extended a sturdy grip and clutched him with, "You ain't paid yet, Mister."

David threw down a bill and was allowed to depart, while a small knot of men standing before the bar laughed raucously.

Again the trolley, a wheeled thing of many lights crowded with blurred black masses which might be people; again the interminable rows of little houses and shops smothered now in darkness. He arrived at last before the marble hallway of the house where he lived and without pause, went on. The water called him—he could hear the whistles of boats, the fog horns, the shrill river voices.

Down a steep hill he half fell, half ran, past a nodding watchman, out upon the wide and uneven expanse of a dock. At last the waters lay before him, singing, soothing, black and mysterious, clutching to their bosom a thousand lights, yellow, red, green, like a woman jealous of her jewels.

Slowly a consciousness of where he was came to him, a consciousness of the stillness and darkness of the unfathomable night. And it was good! It was solace! It crept over him, over his burning brows and fevered body, cooling him, like the pressure of a firm, beloved hand. His brain cleared. And he found that he could think clearly and coherently.

Better that things were as they were, he told himself. Better that they were as they had to be. Better that Nora should go away with her Westerner than take the meager, hidden, hypocritical life of love which was all that he could offer her. And he thought of himself and Nora abroad in the land, fleeing from discovery, endlessly pretending, forced constantly into all sorts of small and mean and shameful dissemblings. But into the calm reasoning of his thoughts broke a small fury of anger. "Damn him!" he cried. "Damn him! What right has he to take her away from me? She's mine. I loved her first. I've loved her best. I've always loved her."

That fury shook him and passed.

After a while he began to wonder about himself. Why was he condemned to suffer? Why was all that was dearest to him invariably snatched away from him? Never had he known complete realization of any ambition. Impersonally he wondered. Like a long script of manuscript his life unrolled itself before him.

Why had he failed? Why was he created to dream and yet never to realize a dream? The awakening found him clutching dead sea fruit—always. He had had so many dreams, so many sorts of dreams. Never a one came true. Perhaps it was because in the very beginning he had not been

true to his first dream, his greatest one, the one in which he had aimed to be of service to his fellow-men. Never had he been of service to any one. Not one! Ineffectual, he was. Terribly ineffectual!

Yet he had never been selfish. He had meant no one harm. Yet he had done them harm—gross harm. Poor little uncomprehending Evelyn—he had done her harm. She had not understood, had not seen things as he saw them; therefore he dismissed her. The others before Evelyn. All of them in varying degrees had suffered in their love for him. And to Nora, whom he loved best of all, if he had had his way he would have done the greatest harm. He would have carried her away from the respect of men—the respect which after so many cruel years she had just regained.

Then he thought of his accomplishments, of his material success. After he had achieved it, he had found it dross. What was this spell that had been put upon him—that sent him from one woman to another, from one ambition to another, and that never left him satisfied for long?

Unlike that king of old whose touch turned everything to gold, his touch turned everything to brass—to brass or, more accurately, to ashes—ashes that passed away, blown away as the night

wind blows the reflected stars from off the face of the waters. . . .

He had given too little of himself, that was it. He had asked for everything and given nothing. . . .

Presently all thought left him and he stood like one of the creaking posts, there by the waters, until the first light of morning crept over them and turned them gray.

CHAPTER XII

THE next evening David waited beneath the lofty ceiling of the Pennsylvania Station. He had arrived there long before the time set by Nora, and every second minute he had compared his watch with the great iron hands of the clock hung over the north stairway. He had wandered around, but never very far nor very long from the meeting place. He had exhausted the possibilities of the shop windows within the main entrance—the haberdasher's with its gaily colored scarfs, its caps and collars and shirts, the toy shop with its dolls and furry bears and a thing of steel that lifted sand to a tower and then dropped it; the book shop with its array of jacketed novels.

Long since he had exhausted these, and now stood impatient and restless beside the doorway which opened into the vast room from which one descended iron stairways to reach the trains.

When he had fully decided that Nora had changed her mind, had taken an earlier train to escape him or—wildly impracticable this!—had found it impossible to carry out her plans, he saw

her crossing the wide expanse of floor toward him. He ran towards her, waved away an insistent porter, and seized her bag himself.

She was smiling bravely. She reminded him of a bird eager for flight, and he could not help but feel resentful of her self-possession and courage. "My taxi broke down," she said. "How much time have we?"

He did not have to consult any clock. "Only fifteen minutes," he answered ruefully.

They walked over to the gate where her train waited. Impatiently people rushed by them, while they found, gazing sadly into each other's eyes, that they had no words. A sense of calamity, of the irrevocable, was upon them. From a distance they could hear a guard, with powerful distinctness, announce the stations at which Nora's train halted.

As if that urged him on, David fell into a furious pleading. Gone now were all his great resolutions of the night before. "Don't go, Nora. Whatever is wrong or right, this is wrong. You don't love him. You love me. I have more than three thousand dollars. We can go away together—anywhere. We can make a start somewhere else."

"Like the people in books," she put in.

"No, like real people—like you and me—real

flesh and blood. Nora, this will break me. I 'm through with living if you go—"

"You don't mean—?" she broke in with distended eyes.

"Oh, I don't mean killing myself. Worse than that— A living death; my life 's been all wrong for lack of you. I need you. I always have. That is what I wanted. That is what has been lacking,"—and as if he had by accident stumbled upon the truth he repeated, "Yes, that is what has been lacking."

She shook her head, tears in her eyes, her lips pressed closely together. "I must go," she said.

She passed through the gate, for the guard had called an imperious summons. He would have barred David's way but David pressed a bill into his hand and forced himself past. He was dumb now. His pleading had been ineffectual—ineffectual again! He was like an actor who had spoken his lines because they were given to him to speak but who must now be silent until the end of the comedy.

Together they reached the long platform against which the train lay with level steps.

"Good-by, my dear," said Nora, and she took her bag from him and kissed him.

But he held her fast; with all his strength, one

hand gripping each of her arms, he locked her to him.

"David!" she cried. "This is madness!"

"Yes, it is madness," he echoed. "But it has to be."

A commotion burst around them, guards called to them; one guard shook David's shoulder. The train began to move slowly, it gained headway; like a serpent with jeweled sides it slid away. Nora had ceased to struggle; a dead weight she had fallen against David so that he had to support her.

The two of them, atoms in that vast place, stood clinging together. The train had vanished. A guard at the head of the stairs was still shouting at them; a negro porter stood near by, grinning at them with white teeth.

David loosened his grasp and held Nora so that he could see into her face. She moved back a step so that his hands fell from her arms. Wearily she passed a hand across her eyes and gazed at the black hole which had devoured the train. Then with a sob, she moved back to David's side and ran her arm through his.

"What are you going to do with me now, David?" she asked.





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